South Indian Festivities

P.V. JAGADISA AYYAR

SOUTH INDIAN FESTIVITIES

P.V. JAGADISA AYYAR

ASIAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
NEW DELHI, 1982

ASIAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
C-2/15, SAFDARJUNG DEVELOPMENT AREA
NEW DELHI-110016

Price Rs. 145
AES REPRINT 1982
Printed in India
Published by J. Jetley
For Asian Educational Services
C-2/15, SDA, New Delhi-110016
Printed by Gian Offset Printers
Shahzada Bagh, Delhi-110035

FOREWORD

Madras, Dec. 19, 1920.

Dear Sir,

I am much obliged to you for your letter and for its enclosures; the latter I now return.

I have consulted your 'South Indian Shrines,' and I find it to be a very interesting and useful work. It is full of matter not to be found in any other general work on South India and indispensable to all students of the sacred topography of the country; and as a work of reference it is highly serviceable. Your archæological experience guarantees its accuracy. It is sure of a wide sale, and it will be in constant use in England and among European scholars. The photographs, also, are useful.

Your new work 'South Indian Festivities,' of which you have kindly let me see 58 pages in proof, is also interesting, and I expect to have frequent occasion to refer to it, as I do to Mr. Bhattacarya's 'Hindu Castes and Sects.' As I have seen only a part of it and the fixed date of publication does not permit of my seeing the whole, I should hardly be justified in supplying a foreword, more especially as the subject is rather beyond my scope. But in the printed opinions of Sir P. S. Sivaswami Ayyar and the Hon. Mr. Justice T. V. Seshagiri Ayyar you have all that you require. So I need only say that you have brought together much apposite matter concerning actual custom and belief and supplied useful explanations. The book seems to be likely to achieve a considerable popularity.

I am returning the volume and the proofs. Believe me, with sincere thanks for your kind help and best wishes

Yours truly,
F. W. THOMAS

P. V. Jagadisa Ayyar, Esq.,
Manager, Archæological Dept., MADRAS.

FOREWORD TO THE TAMIL EDITION

By Sir P. S. Sivaswami Ayyar :

Fasts and Festivities occupy a very considerable part of an orthodox Hindu's life. The real origin of these is mostly lost in obscurity and would be an interesting field of investigation to those interested in the scientific study of social and religious usages in India. The traditional explanations, however, of these usages are to be found scattered in different books, and Mr. Jagadisa Ayyar has done a very useful piece of work in this endeavour to compile those explanations in his little book. Whatever may be their intrinsic value from a scientific point of view, the presentation of their origin as popularly believed and in the form in which they supply a motive for observance at the present time is not without interest even to the modern Hindu mind which, in many cases, is too little equipped with a scientific curiosity about the history of its social institutions.

By Hon. Mr. Justice T. V. Seshagiri Ayyar :

Mr. P. V. Jagadisa Ayyar has asked me to say a few words by way of preface to his book. It is generally believed that many of the festivities and religious ceremonies observed by Hindus are meaningless formalities. I am not sure that the majority of those who observe them really have any idea of their significance. Mr. Jagadisa Ayyar has done good service to the people by explaining the *rationale* of our fasts and feasts. I have examined his statements and I am glad to say that they are reliable and accurate. A publication like this must be in the hands of our young boys to whom an attempt is being made in our national institutions to impart religious instruction. I have no doubt that managers of these schools will find the book useful and instructive. Even more than the boys, our girls should read the contents of this book. These religious and festive occasions mean more to them than to the boys, and they should know the why and wherefore of these observances. Mr. Jagadisa Ayyar is entitled to the thanks of the Hindu public for his publication.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A. S.—Age of Sankara by T. S. Narayana Sastri 1918.

A. S. I.—Archæological Survey of India (Annual Reports published by the Government of India).

D. P. H.—Daily Practice of the Hindus. Published by the Panini Office, Allahabad.

E. H. I.—Elements of Hindu Iconography by T. A. Gopinatha Rao. Printed at the Law Printing House, Madras 1914 & 1916.

F. F. F.—Faiths, Fairs and Festivals of India by Buck. Thacker, Spink & Co. Calcutta 1917.

F. H.—An Alphabetical List of the Feasts & Holidays of the Hindus and Muhammadans. Published by the Superintendent, Government Printing, India 1914.

H. B. T.—A Hand Book of the Trees, Shrubs and Herbaceous Plants. (Published by Higginbotham & Co. 1866.)

H. F.—Hindu and Mahammadan Festivals by John Murdoch 1904.

H. H. C.—Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials by Gupte. (Published by Thacker, Spink & Co 1919.)

H. S.—Hindu Superiority by Sarda 1917.

I. A.—Indian Architecture. Published by A. V. T. Ayyar & Sons, 1920.

I. C.—Indian Calendar by Sewell & Balakrishna Dikhit, 1896.

I. M. P.—Inscriptions of the Madras Presidency. (Published by the Government of Madras 1919.)

K.—Kalaprakssika by N. P. Subramania Ayyar, 1917.

M. A. D.—Madras Archæological Dept. (Annual Reports published by the Government of Madras.)

M. A. M. P.—Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency. Vol. III. (Published by the Government of Madras 1893.)

M. E. D.—Madras Epigraphical Department (Annual Reports published by the Government of Madras.)

M. I.—Mysore and Coorg from the Inscriptions by Rice. (Published by the Government of Mysore in 1909.)

M. P.—Markandeya Purana by M. N. Dutt 1897.

S. I. G. G.—South Indian Gods and Goddesses by Rao Bahadur H. Krishna Sastrigal. Published by the Government of Madras in 1916.

S. I. S.—South Indian Shrines by P. V. Jagadisa Ayyar. (Published by the Madras Times Publishing Company Ld. 1920.)

S. M. T.—Some Madras Trees by Butterworth, 1911.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.

It is but a truism when we say that the life of an orthodox Hindu consists in the observances of a large number of fasts and festivities. The origin and rationale of most of these are lost in obscurity by the lapse of centuries. The traditional explanations found scattered in certain rare manuscripts, proverbs, sayings, nay even in some of the nursery rhymes of the Hindus, have been lost, and in the course of time are sure to be completely beyond the reach of humanity, if early steps are not taken to gather and preserve them.

It is proverbial that the Hindus follow the customs of their forefathers blindly without understanding in the least the real motive of its origin and the basic principle underlying them. Many stories current may be narrated to illustrate this statement of facts, but I will narrate in brief only one and pass on.

Once upon a time a great sage performed a sacrifice. A large number of people had assembled to witness the performance. A tame black cat which was tied to the pillar supporting the sacrificial shed with a rope of *Kusa* grass *(Eragrotis cynosuroides)*, because it was often coming there and upsetting the sacrificial vessels and arrangements, was taken by the simple-minded audience as a *sine-qua-non* for the observance of such a sacrifice. From that time forward, great pains were taken to secure a black cat by the would-be performers of such a sacrifice! An act to get rid of a nuisance was construed into an act of primary importance for the performance of a sacrifice, simply because the people did not care to know 'The why and the wherefore' of particular acts.

Every village has a temple, and people circumambulate it. Ask them as to why it should be done and you are taken for an impertinent unbeliever.

The use of turmeric powder with lime water to cast off the influence of evil eye, is a common sight during marriage occasions and marriage processions; but how many will be able to give a rational explanation for the use?

We may quote instances after instances of people following this or that custom blindly, without understanding why and wherefore they do it. Such a practice is surely not conducive to popular welfare.

The Hindu festivals and *Vrathas* were designed by the great sages of old. They were full of wisdom and capable of understanding and utilising the forces of nature in the universe. They understood thoroughly human nature and human wants. They also knew the dangers humanity is susceptible to from super-physical forces and intelligences. Just as fly-papers are made use of to get rid of flies, substances like a mixture of turmeric and quicklime in a quantity of water were made use of, to get rid of super-physical pests, directing super-physical forces, in a manner injurious to human safety and welfare. They originated temples, festivals, *Vrathas*, fasts and so forth with definite aims. As they were thoroughly conversant with the needs of men while living, and also with their needs after they die, their aims may be said to be two-fold. For convenience's sake, we may sharply divide their aims into physical aims and spiritual aims. The festivals, *Vrathas*, fasts, etc., are designed to serve one or other or both of these aims.

From the standpoint of those wise sages, physical acts are for serving spiritual ends, and consequently people who take the short cut to spiritual progress need not attach much importance to observances fostering physical gifts, but may utilise them as temporary stepping stones to reach greater heights. But a very very large majority cannot take this short cut at this stage of human evolution, and consequently the observance of the festivals and *Vrathas* should naturally be of a kind conducive to bodily comfort and relief, contributing but little to spiritual progress. But each and every one of the festivals and *Vrathas* has a deep spiritual significance, and persons capable of taking the short cut to spiritual progress, may advance very rapidly, if they but understand the principle underlying the observance, and take to it in the right manner and in the right spirit.

If physical results are to be taken into consideration, there are myths attached to each and every one of the fasts, feasts, *Vrathas* and festivals, and if people understand them and follow in the footsteps of the heroes depicted therein, physical results are sure to follow sooner or later.

When spiritual progress by the observance of this or that *Vratha* is to be explained, we must examine what takes place in nature every day around

us, and see whether there may not be anything akin to it, in the birth, growth, decay, and death of man. We should also see that our sacred scriptures are used as touchstones to test our inferences.

Every one will concede that there is a goal towards which everything in nature is tending. The aim of a tree is to produce seeds capable of reproducing the parent tree. The same thing is true in the animal kingdom also. Herein lies the key to unravel the mystery of the nature and progress of human spirit. Only this fact is emphasised by the phallic symbol in Siva temples and the images of gods and goddesses in all temples.

The human body and the human principles are but layers within which the seed namely 'the spirit' is forming and maturing or ripening. When the seed is fully ripe, it will have no use whatsoever for the human body and the human principles and consequently it would shake or cast them off and begin to grow to the shape and size of the parent it originated from. Let us take the formation and growth of this spiritual seed for our examination. To do this satisfactorily and clearly, we must distinctly bear in mind the seed simile. The principle out of which the tree grows is in the kernel we all know. This kernel has layers of pulp, skin and so on to protect it till it can resist extraneous influences. Human spirit is exactly like this kernel imbedded in layers of matter going by the names '*Kosas*' or sheaths in Hindu philosophical parlance. Unlike the layers in a seed of a tree, the layers surrounding and protecting the spirit are cast off and renewed in the same way in which the slough of a serpent is cast off and renewed.

Scientists tell us that there are invisible forces between atoms and molecules holding them together. By stretching our imagination we can conceive these lines of forces gradually developing in minerals and vegetables. In fact, these are the lines on which the future nervous systems of animals are to be developed. The Hindus consider certain trees and plants in the vegetable kingdom, and certain animals among the animals of the world, to be more evolved than the others. This conception is the result of observations made on the development of these lines of forces.

These lines of forces, when they reach a particular stage of development, manifest themselves as fine streaks of light emitting a halo of light around them. These streaks, by play of forces, gather around them material sheaths of various grades of tenuity, forming the complicated nervous systems of animals. The various ganglionic knots are centres of brilliance

gathering around them material sheaths similar to the nervous sheaths. These centres of brilliance with the net work of fibres of light diffusing a halo of light forming a definite beautiful shape within an ovoid of light, is really the spirit of man.

Brighter these centres and streaks of light in animals are, finer will be their nervous systems and consequently better bodies for receiving finer vibrations of emotion and intellect, built round them. The development of these centres and the connecting net work of streaks of light to the point of perfection, is in fact the goal towards which human and other evolutions are tending. The Hindu philosophy and their systems of *Yoga* are intended mainly to achieve this end. When this point of evolution is reached, the *Kosas* or material sheaths having served their purposes, would fall off from the spirit to which they are now clinging, leaving it free to complete its own growth to the likeness of its parent.

Just as there are differences in the seeds from the number of the protective coverings for the kernels, there are differences in the intelligences also in the universe. The intelligence having the largest number of coverings, goes by the name 'man,' and those having fewer ones, go by the names of various grades of angels or *Devas*. There are hosts and hosts of them and of innumerable kinds and varieties. But the kernel or the spirit principle in every one of them is the same.

The sages of old knew this, and consequently originated the festivals, etc., with the progress of the spirit in view. For the progress of the spirit, the well-being of the various coverings is absolutely necessary till it is completely developed. Therefore the various customs and observances are so designed as to serve the purpose of spiritual growth, first by strengthening the coverings, and eventually but gradually, by throwing off those coverings, when they have accomplished their purposes.

Men in different stages of attainment or evolution are found in this world. Some require the outermost sheath to be strengthened for the welfare of the spirit within; to such, the observances would secure a healthy and strong body.

Some may require good emotional coats, and others mental coverings. The proper observances of the festivals would give to each, what he or she wants for the evolution of spirit in him or her.

The Hindu temples are intended to show by concrete physical designs the constitution of man both in his higher and lower aspects. The various *prakaras* stand for the various protective coverings, the deity in the sanctum sanctorum or the innermost *sabha* or hall of the temple standing for the human spirit.

When the spirit gets tired of the outermost coat, it casts it away and uses the next one to be cast away after a while, repeating the process with each and every one of the coverings, till it stands in its own effulgence. The attainment of this stage is the Hindu conception of *Mukthi* or liberation from birth and death.

From what is set forth above, it will be clear that the aims of the observance of the Hindu festivals, etc., appear contradictory; some contributing to the welfare of the body at the expense of the spirit and some to the welfare of the spirit at the expense of the bodies or sheaths in man. There is also a maxim 'Live in body and die in spirit and live in spirit but die in body.' In fact, if one cares for spiritual progress he should cast off material attachments, since such attachments result in birth and death detrimental to the growth of the spirit.

In the early stages, the spirit grows with the growth of the body, physical, emotional and mental. Finer these bodies are by regulated and select matter, emotion, food, and thought supplied to build them, more and more beautiful, will be the radiant spirit and the colours it flashes out with every passing emotion and thought.

It will be very interesting to note that only certain temples, certain rivers, certain localities and certain mountains, are considered potent enough to bestow the maximum benefits on men. The reason for this is, that the progress of humanity as a whole is under special intelligences recognised as *Adhikarika Purushas* or souls entrusted with the authority, of course from higher and mightier entities. These magnetise special centres and consequently, progress in those localities will be easier to achieve. Further, forces are liberated and poured on particular occasions on this earth. To bestow the maximum benefit on humanity by the quantity of force liberated, it is essential that a large number of people assemble at a particular place on a particular occasion favourable for the purpose. This aim is achieved by

magnetising certain centres to draw people there in large numbers to benefit them. Hence have arisen famous religious localities, temples, rivers, and hills.

The festivals described in this volume will be found to have been originated to propitiate one or other of the Hindu Trinity--Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. Temples dedicated to Brahma and festivals observed to propitiate him will be found to be very few, and, in fact, we may say they are nil and negligible. The reason for this is obvious. Brahma's duty is to create and we are all created. So there is no need to propitiate him. We see struggles for existence everywhere. Every one tries hard to *preserve* and consequently the propitiation of the preservative aspect—Vishnu—is the most essential thing. Hence the worship of Vishnu and the *devas* like Indra, Yama, and so on, who are in a way under him, will be the prominent feature in all religious observances meant for the preservation of body, health, wealth and so on.

Emotional elevation and progress is the next important thing. This emotional aspect is like a hinge. It has two halves, so to say, one attached to the material world and the material body and its needs, and the other to intellectual achievements. To serve the first purpose, episodes in the lives of saints like Nanda, are enacted in a manner to stir the emotions latent in men, and thereby help the spirit to polish one of its facets, or in other words, to develop one of its aspects. With this object in view, certain great Hindu teachers had started the devotional schools called '*Bajana* Parties.' The great *Bhaktas* (mystics) like Kabir, etc., referred to at length in books like 'Bhakta Vijayam,' have set examples in devotion for humanity to follow.

Next comes the sphere of intellect, for progress in which, several schools of philosophy have arisen.

The attainment of the goal is possible through what is called Mysticism or *Bhakti* for some. Such people should take to the observance of such of the festivals, *Vrathas*, etc., that could serve their purpose.

The goal may be reached through intellect also. Men capable of taking to this path, should observe the *Vrathas*, etc., dedicated to deities like Subrahmanyam and Vinayakar symbolising wisdom.

The shortest but the most difficult and dangerous path to reach the goal is said to be the path of '*yoga*'. It is said to be as short and narrow as the razor's edge. People capable of taking to this path may observe the *Vrathas* dedicated to Siva, the destructive aspect.

There are also *Vrathas* observed to propitiate the *devas*, etc. These could confer on men only boons within their limited jurisdiction. For the attainment of the final goal, observances of festivals and *Vrathas* dedicated to one or other of the Trinity, namely, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, is highly essential. In Hindu Scriptures, we find ancient sages performing penance invoking the presence of one of the Trinity only and not the *devas* like Indra, Kubera, and so on.

In conclusion, I may say that people should first of all try to understand their place and temperament in the ladder of evolution, and take to the systematic observance of a selected *Vratha*, throughout their life-time to attain the desired end. Though they may observe all the festivals and *Vrathas*, each one of them should have a special *Vratha*, so that the deity presiding over it may be drawn to them and bestow on them the desired for end. At any rate, all people should try to understand the wherefore of the observance, before taking to this or that *Vratha*. Then and then only will this land of spirituality—INDIA—will regain its lost, or at any rate, almost completely disappearing, prestige due to the cumulative influence of spiritual progress in the land. When this stage is re-attained, the condition of the Krita age will be restored. With the ardent desire to initiate mental exertion in this direction, this volume is launched into the world by its author and dedicated to the sages—the *Adhikarika Purushas*. May their blessings rest on humanity!!

SOUTH INDIAN FESTIVITIES.

CHAPTER I

BHOGI PANDIGAI.

Of the many Hindu festivals, the one going by the name "Bhogi Pandigai," is observed on the last day of Dakshinayana[1] or the period of the

Fig. 1—*Ashtadikpalakas* or the deities of the cardinal points.

Sun's southerly course. The day is also one, which precedes 'Makara[2] Sankranti[3]'; the occasion when the Sun enters Capricorn. The festival is

1. A course (from Sanskrit *ay*=to go). Sun's progress from one solstice to another. Uttarayanam or northward progress, from Tai to Ani and Dakshinayanam or southward progress, 'from Adi to Margali' are the two ayanams which compose a year. The former is the night and the latter the day of the devas (celestials). It is during the former that everything done, though virtuous in itself, is considered unprofitable in effects; while those done in the latter are supposed to have a virtuous effect. Consequently all Hindus devote themselves to the study of the Vedas, Celebration of marriages and auspicious rites during the Uttarayana season.

2. Means dolphin as the Sun stands in that zodiacal constellation.

3. The passage of the Sun from any one sign into another. In common usage specially applied to Makara Sankranti.

observed in the month of January in honour of Indra[1] on elephant (Figure 1), the god of the heavens, who is supposed to control the clouds and usher into the world seasonal rains causing thereby abundance and prosperity in the country. In fact, this festival and the two following it going by the names of 'sankranti' and 'Gopuja', are similar to the observances of the harvest feast in the countries of Europe. The term 'Bhogi Pandigai' means 'The festival of physical enjoyment.' The name had its origin perhaps from the bringing in of the harvest which is the source of all enjoyment. The ryots have then their well-earned rest after a period of strenuous exertion in the fields, for raising crops and bringing in the harvest.

Moreover, it is the commencement of the Hindu marriage season, and *jocose* people are used to say then that 'The marriage court is open.' At any rate the festival is considered to be the harbinger of the coming period of marriage and enjoyment, and is consequently observed by the people in a fitting manner.

A good deal of scrubbing and cleaning goes on in all the houses in the country. Prior to daybreak on the festive day, the dirt and rubbish accumulations of the past year are swept out and burnt. The village and the several houses therein, present a smart and tidy look. As the northerly course of the Sun then commences, the six months beginning from that date, go by the name of 'Uttarayanam' and the particular occasion itself is called 'Uttarayana punyakalam,' *i.e.*, 'The auspicious hour when the Sun commences his northerly course, entering the Capricorn.'

There is also a myth attached to the festival and it is very interesting. In the Dwapara Yuga[2], Lord Sri Krishna[3] desired to teach Indra a lesson

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1. For detailed information consult footnote 2 on page 27 of S. I. S.

2. This and other *yugas* are dealt with on pages 2 & 3 of S. I. S. There are four Yugas, the first of which is Satya or Krita, then follow Treta, Dvapara, and Kali. The anniversary of the first day of the Satya Yuga falls on the third lunar day in the bright fortnight of Vaisakha (April-May); the four incarnations in this age were the *Matsya* or Fish, *Kurma* or Tortoise, *Varaha* or Boar, and *Nrisimha* or the Man-lion. The anniversary of the first day of the Treta Yuga falls on the ninth lunar day in the bright half of Karttika (October-November); the incarnations in this age were the *Vamana* or Dwarf, *Parasurama* and *Rama*. The anniversary of the first day of the Dvapara Yuga falls on the thirteenth of the waning moon in the month of Bhadra (August September) of which Sri Krishna and Buddha were the incarnations. The anniversary of the first day of the Kali Yuga is the full-moon day in Magha. *Kalki* will be the incarnation in this age. On all these anniversary days a bath in some sacred river and charity are enjoined. On these days water mixed with sesamum seeds should be regularly presented to the progenitors of mankind (Pitris.) Fig. 1. on page 84 of F. H.

3. Is said to correspond to Apollo of the western mythology.

since he was found to be rather arrogant. So he prevailed upon the Yadhavas (Shepherds) of Brindavana[1] to offer sacrifices to the mountain Govardhana[2] instead of to Indra, on the Bhogi Pandigai day of a particular year, stating that they were not agriculturists to care for the seasonal rains of Indra, but were cowherds depending on the mountain Govardhana, which afforded rich pasturage for their cattle. When Indra saw that he was balked of his legitimate offerings by the machinations of Sri Krishna, he grew angry and wanted to punish the Yadhavas for listening to the evil advice of Krishna. The clouds that bring rain, thunder and lightning are said to be seven in number and they were under Indra's orders. Induced by their master, the seven clouds began to rain very heavily in the territory of the Yadhavas, who terrified at the severity of the supernatural rain that was falling incessantly for days together, destroying men and cattle by thousands, hastened to Sri Krishna and solicited his help.

Krishna thereupon lifted up the mountain Govardhana by his occult powers and held it aloft. The Yadhavas with their cattle and other belongings took shelter under the lifted-up mountain, till Indra ordered the clouds to desist, finding himself thwarted in the attempt at browbeating the Yadhavas to bring them to their senses.

Eventually, Indra recognised Lord Vishnu in Sri Krishna and began to repent for his folly, in having tried his prowess against that of one of the Trinity.

Sri Krishna also relented and permitted the Yadhavas to resume the old custom of celebrating the Bhogi Pandigai in honour of Indra.

There is a strong belief among the Hindus, that a really pious man should not die during the months of *Dakshinayanam*, but should die only during *Uttarayanam*. Some even go to the extent of saying that people who die only during *Uttarayanam* go to heaven, while those that die during *Dakshinayanam* remain in the various levels of the nether world, till they are born again in the world to work out their *Karma* (action, from Sanskrit *Kru*=to do) by playing the part assigned to them in the world's drama of life.

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1. See also footnote 5 on page 18, of S. I. S.
2. For further information reference may be made to the footnote on page 35 of S. I. S

Anyhow, the months comprised in Dakshinayanam are generally unhealthy, bringing in their wake, disease and death, while those in the Uttarayanam bring to the people, vitality and health. The Sun is said to nourish not only our earth, but also the various planets and stars comprised in his system. The planet specialising the vitality absorbed by them from the Sun, pour it in our world to be used by men, animals and plants. As most of the stars and planets are in the north, and very few in the south, the southerly course of the Sun is detrimental to their absorption of vitality from it, and consequently the receipt of specialised vitality in this world of ours flowing from the various planets and stars is reduced. This is perhaps the main reason for the people hailing with delight the advent of Uttarayanam. In this connection, the Hindu custom of burning a corpse with the head placed towards the south may be noted, since it shows that the southern direction is symbolical of death, and in fact Yama, the God of death, is said to reside in that direction. The story of Trisanku hurled down from the heavens by Indra but suspended in the south by Viswamitra by his prowess and who is said to be shining there even now as 'the southern cross' bears out the statement made above when rightly pondered over.

In MAHABALIPURAM near Madras, there is a sculptural[1] representation of the scene relating to the Govardhanagiri incident described in the myth[2] quoted above. From the incident of Krishna uplifting the mountain and saving the people of Brindavana, his aspect here, is known as 'Govardhana-Udhara-Krishna.' The mandapa or portico in which this incident is sculptured goes by the name of 'Krishna Mandapa.'

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1. This is illustrated in Figure 15 on page 34 of S. I. S.
2. Detailed version could be got from Wilson's translation of 'Vishnu Purana.'

CHAPTER II.

SANKRANTI.

The name Sankranti is a general one given to the day on which the sun passes from one sign of the Zodiac* (*Rasi*) to another (Fig. 2); yet it has a restricted application and special reference to the day on which the sun enters the house called Makara (Capricornus) in the Tamil month of *Tai* corresponding to the English month January-February. The occasion is called 'Makara Sankranti[1]' though the Tamil-speaking people have given the festival day the name "Pongal[2] Pandigai" for the reason that the newly harvested rice is first cooked and the preparation goes by the name "Pongal."

It is laid down in the Hindu scriptures that food should be cooked not with the object of eating but only to serve the purpose of a sacrifice and an offering to God[3]. The remnant of the food, if any, after the sacrifice, may be eaten. Hence the newly harvested rice is cooked as an offering to the sun

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*Refer also to page 261 of S. I. S. & I. A. page 64 Book 1.

1. Makara is supposed to be an aquatic animal of the Crocodile species that has now become extinct. The name *mriga* (a deer) is supposed to have been made use of to denote this animal; as according to some textual version, Uttarayana and Dakshinayana are spoken of as the 'deer Sankranti' and the 'crab Sankranti' respectively.

2. The name 'Pongal' is given to rice boiled in milk. It is generally cooked in the courtyard of the house. The Tamil word Pongu and Telugu one Pongodhi mean 'boil'.

Ears of corn are gathered in bunches and hung up at the doorways and entrances as well as in the walls of rooms as decorations. They are generally allowed to remain till the next year.

3. Lord Siva is said to be highly pleased by the burnt offering on Sankranthi day, of *Tila* (Sesame) mixed with or soaked in ghee and consequently bestow prosperity on the observers of this Vrata which is given the name of Maha-Tila-deepa-Vratha.

There is also another Vrata observed on the Makara Saukranti day to please Siva and it goes by the name "Mahavarthi Vrata". When the sun enters the Rasi Makara, a lamp filled with cow's ghee is burnt using a stout wick of cotton thread.

Some people fast for a month consuming only a very small quantity of milk and that too only when there is the fear of death from hunger exhaustion. This observance is called the observance of 'Masa-Upavasa-Vrata' and it may commence from the first or the eleventh day of either of the lunar fortnight or from the new-moon or full-moon day, or from the day on which the sun passes from one zodiacal sign to another. Though the minimum period for the observance of the Vrata is one month, yet it may be continued for three, six or even twelve months, subsisting on milk only when there is the fear of loss of life from complete starvation.

The burning of two sacred lamps on the Sankranti day, one fed with oil and the other with ghee, is believed to have the power to enable the observer of this Vrata going by the name 'Sankaranti-Vrata-Deepo-dhyapauam', to reach Siva's or Vishnus's region after death, according as he worships the former or the latter.

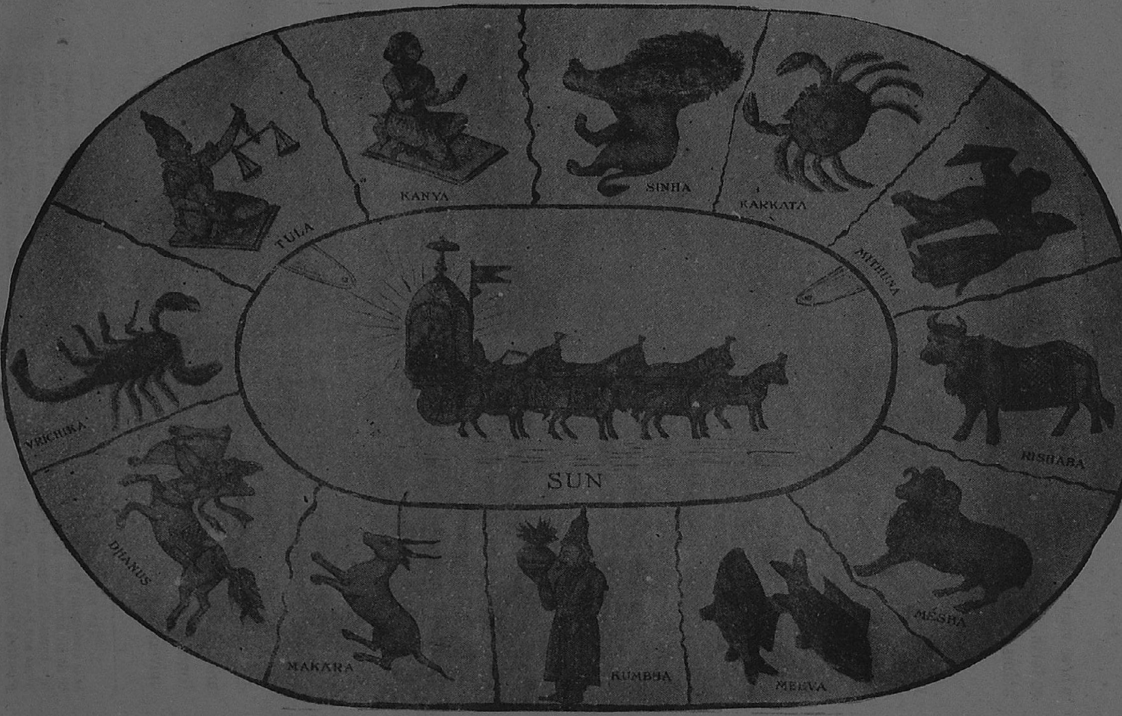

Fig. 2—*Rasi-mandalam* or the Zodiacal Signs.

whose vitality going by the different names of electricity, magnetism, and so forth, nourishes everything in the world, both in the vegetable and in the animal kingdoms.

Though the sun is worshipped primarily and chiefly on this occasion, yet the other elements favouring the increase of the flock and the produce of the crops are not ignored. Vayu, the god of wind, is worshipped on the occasion, since he is the lord of the monsoons without which no rain is possible. The tutelary deity of the family called the "Griha devatha" is also worshipped to ensure a happy life in the house, and the worship goes by the name of "Vastu pooja[1]."

An open court-yard is a sine-qua-non in all houses of a South Indian village, to perform marriages in, for exposing grain and other things to the sun to dry, and so on. In this court-yard, a spot where the bright sun-light falls is chosen for the performance of the pooja. The place is well scrubbed, cleaned and washed with cowdung mixed with water. A lotus patere with octagonal petals is designed with powdered rice deftly scattered by the ladies of the house with their forefingers and thumbs. The centre of this is graced with the design of the Sun-God, with his consorts Samja and Chaya, the former the daughter of the divine architect Viswakarma, and the latter her exact replica. The interesting myth relating to the two consorts of the sun is as follows :—

Samja, unable to endure the effulgence of her lord the sun, went into the forest to perform penance with a view to obtain sufficient strength to withstand the same, leaving her *Chaya* (shadow) in her place. The sun, however, came to know of the change effected by Samja, and consequently went in quest of her. On the way, he found a beautiful mare and immediately fell in love with it. Metamorphosing himself into a horse he had union with that mare and the two Aswins of the Hindu mythology were the fruits of this union, and they are said to be the foremost physicians of the universe.

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1. The pooja called 'Vastu Pooja' is observed when a new house is entered and occupied. It is a ceremony prescribed in the Vedas and the other religious scriptures. No house is said to be fit for human use unless and until this puja is performed in it. If one is desirous to live happily in a house, it is necessary for him to perform this pooja. 'Vastu' is the presiding deity of the house and he is held in great veneration by the people in India. Hence this Pooja is to satisfy the presiding deity of the house.

The children—a son and a daughter—born to the sun of Samja—are Yama, the God of death, and Yamuna, the goddess of the river of that name.

The consort Chaya too, had issues born to her, and they were a son and a daughter. The former is the planet Saturn, and the latter is the river Tapti.

When Samja went to perform *Tapas* (penance), she left her two children Yama and Yamuna with her co-wife of the sun Chaya, with the request, that they might be taken care of, and treated with kindness. Chaya did treat them with kindness, till children were born to her, and then she began to ill-treat them.

Yama would not brook the partiality shown to her children and the injustice done to him and his sister, by his step-mother. Consequently he kicked her with his foot in anger, who thereupon cursed him saying that the foot raised to kick her—his step-mother—should become a mass of rotten flesh infested with loathsome worms. Yama then approached his father and represented to him the injustice and unfair treatment meted out to him and his sister by Chaya and the curse levelled at him by her when he kicked her by way of protest.

As curses from parents could not be easily undone, the sun mitigated the evil by countermanding the curse and reducing the result to that of worms falling down with bits of flesh instead of permanently infesting the flesh in the foot and giving trouble.

As Yama always espoused the cause of justice and was found to be highly impartial in dealing with one and all, he won the name of "Dharma Raja," the king of justice, and was appointed to hold sway over the realms of the dead, where he administers justice without any partiality. No one who commits a sin can escape his punishment, and the punishment inflicted is in each case very just.

The myth is said to be a profound allegory containing deep spiritual truth just as the allegory of "sin and death" in Milton's "Paradise Lost." In fact, almost all the Hindu myths are allegories. One should pierce through the veil of words to understand the real significance conveyed in the myths.

Fig. 3—TIRUVADI Temple with the *Dhvajastambha* (Flag-staff) inside.

A bath[1] in certain sacred rivers such as the Cauvery on the auspicious and sacred occasion of "Makara Sankaramana Punyakalam" is considered highly meritorious. People therefore flock in large numbers on this occasion every year at TIRUVADI near Tanjore (Figure 3) considered specially important by the ancient Hindus, as well as in the river TAMPARAPARNI coursing through the district of Tinnevelly and in the sea at VEDARANYAM. A sage named Hemarishi is said to have prayed to Vishnu on the banks of the tank called 'Pottamarai Kulam' meaning the tank of gold lotuses, in the Sri Sarangapani temple at KUMBACONAM on one such auspicious occasion and was blessed with the sight of the lord of the temple—Sarangapani—in response to his prayers. Further the God Sundareswara of MADURA is said to have performed a miracle, making a stone image of an elephant eat sugarcanes, appearing as a magician (*siddhar*) before the multitude on a particular Sankranti day!

On a stone south of the vimanam of the Viraragava temple at TIRUVALLUR near Madras is an inscription[2] relating to the 5th year of the reign of the Chola King Kulottunga granting land for Makara Samkaramana festival.

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1. "There is not a river in the world which has influenced humanity or contributed to the growth of material civilization or of social ethics to such an extent as the Ganges. The wealth of India has been concentrated on its valley, and beneath the shade of trees whose roots have been nourished by its waters, the profoundest doctrines of moral philosophy have been conceived to be promulgated afar for the guidance of the world."—Imperial Gazeteer, Vol. 1, p. 26, Fig. 2 on page 31 of H. F.

The devas are always working for the prosperity of human beings. The six months commencing from the Makara Sankranti day are said to be the day-time of the devas. The morning hours are said to be specially favourable for receiving the influences liberated by the devas for the benefit of humanity. Hence bath and *Japan* (prayer) in the mornings of the days of these six months are ordained in the scriptures of the Hindus.

2. This forms number 1193 on page 466, Volume I. M. A. M. P.

CHAPTER III.

GO-PUJA (COW WORSHIP).

The day next to Sankranti is set apart for the worship of cows. The festival is given the name of 'Mattu-Pongal' from the custom of cooking pongal for the cows to feed on. Cattle form the chief asset of an agriculturist and consequently it is but proper that their services during the year are recognised. Hence a small portion of the year's produce is utilised to feed them. This is perhaps the simplest explanation that can be given for the origin of the custom.

There is an Indian proverb which says that the joys of the world do not exist for one without wealth, and cattle formed the wealth of the primitive inhabitants of the globe. Hence the sages of old have in their profound wisdom laid it down that the worship of the bulls and cows once a year at least is necessary to be free from want, disease and sin.

People do worship the sacred animal—the cow—once a year, not only because the same is enjoined in the scriptures if one wants to have good children born to him, but also from the fact that its milk forms a most important article of diet to all human beings, both men and women, young or old, and consequently deserves to be specially noticed at least once a year.

The ethical code of the highly evolved of the Hindu sages is quite different from what is in vogue at the present time among ordinary people. The present day moral code does not prevent the owner of a cow from sending it to the knacker's yard as soon as it is dry. The owner of a horse or a dog shoots his animal with impunity if he finds the same not serviceable, forgetting the benefit he had derived from it when it was strong and in active service. But the sages of old thought, that the milk from the udders of the cow was intended by nature for the calf, and consequently if man took the same by force for his selfish use he became a thief. Similarly they thought that if an animal was serviceable to an individual even for a very short period, he must treat it with kindness and protect it till its death, and

if he did not do so, he committed the sin of ingratitude. People even go to the extent of saying that the sages of old when they performed sacrifices never used to kill animals, but simply asked them for the particular portions of flesh from their body which they willingly relinquished, and the sages by their yogic[1] powers made it possible for the animals to live till the portions given, formed once again in course of time to carry on the bodily functions. The same procedure was observed by the wise men of old with regard to the vegetable kingdom also. They recited certain incantations addressing the presiding deity of the plants whose portions they may desire for their use and the presiding deity forthwith placed at their disposal the parts solicited, cheerfully and gladly. In fact, when sage Kanva wanted presents for his adopted daughter Sakuntala, he got them from the various trees of the forest in which his hermitage was located, only in this manner.

Considering these facts, it is no wonder that the Hindus try to show their feelings of gratitude to the cattle that were of immense use to them during the past year, by performing pooja to them, as soon as the harvest season is over.

There is a myth relating to the origin of the cow and it is a very interesting allegory. As soon as men came into existence, they felt the waste of tissues in their body and did not know how to recoup it. They naturally approached Brahma[2] who created them to help them. He thought that the celestial nectar would be too strong for men—who were mere children when compared to the devàs,—to digest, and consequently took a quantity of it himself, specialised it in his body and reduced it to a form in which men can with safety take it.

He then took the form of a cow and made the nectar specialised flow from her udders to feed his children—the human beings. Hence the cow is considered as father and mother in one and consequently one becomes patricide, a matricide, and the slayer of Brahma if he kills a cow. If one but ill-treats a cow, he becomes a great sinner. If one worships a cow he worships Brahma as well as his parents. If he protects a cow, he protects his parents in their old age.

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1. *Yogam* (from San. *Yuj* = to join).

2. Brahma (from San., *Brih* = to increase) Masculine gender. The first member of the Trimurthi. The supreme spirit manifested as the active creator of the universe.

There is also a sort of sacredness attached to the foam emanating from the mouth of a cow, and the mythical reason for the same is as given under.

As soon as Brahma swallowed the quantity of nectar and assumed the form of the cow, a large quantity of foam was formed in his mouth and it began to fall on a Sivalingam. As the foam was nothing else but nectar, Siva[1] was highly pleased. From that time forward it was ordained that the foam in the mouth of a cow should be considered as sacred as nectar itself. The sin of pollution attaches itself to the foam in the mouth of any other animal, but that in the mouth of a cow is to be considered holy, and consequently it is as free from pollution as fire, wind, and gold are said to be. In fact, every part of the cow is said to be divine in its origin and it is enjoined in the Hindu sacred scriptures, that it should be treated with reverence.

There is also another myth emphasising the importance of the cow. A Brahmin in the city of Muttra had once owned a cow by name Bahula which was grazing on the banks of the river Jamna, on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight of Badrapadha, that is, in the month of September-October. Suddenly a tiger appeared there and desired to gobble up the cow.

The cow had a calf very much loved by her and consequently begged the tiger to permit her to go home, feed her calf and then come back to be devoured by it. The tiger consented and the cow went home. While the cow was away, the tiger departed its life from an accident that had happened to it. The spirit that was in the tiger's body was in reality a

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1. Siva, as the God of generation and justice, is represented as riding a bull, which is emblematic of reproductive energy. His own colour as well as that of the bull is white, referring probably to the unsullied purity of justice. His throat is dark blue, he has matted hair, has three eyes, one being in the centre of the forehead. These are said to note his view of the three divisions of time,—past, present and future. His trident is the emblem which shows he combines the attributes of creator, destroyer and regenerator in himself. A crescent on his forehead indicates the measure of Time by the phases of the moon. He is covered with serpents which are the emblems of immortality, while a necklace of human skulls marks the lapse and revolution of ages and the extinction and succession of generations of mankind.

Siva is the great destroying and dissolving power. But destruction implies reproduction, because the Hindu believes in the transmigration of souls. So as Siva and Sankara 'the auspicious' he is the reproductive power which is perpetually restoring that which has been dissolved. Under this character of restorer he is represented by his symbol the Linga or phallus, typical of reproduction; and it is under this form alone or combined with the Yoni or female organ, the representative of his Sakti or female energy, that he is everywhere worshipped. The Linga therefore represents "life out of death or life everlasting." "The spirit of the (linga) worship is as little influenced by the character of the type as can well be imagined. It is all spiritual and mystical"—H. H. Wilson : Fig. 1 on pp. 75 & 76 of H. F.

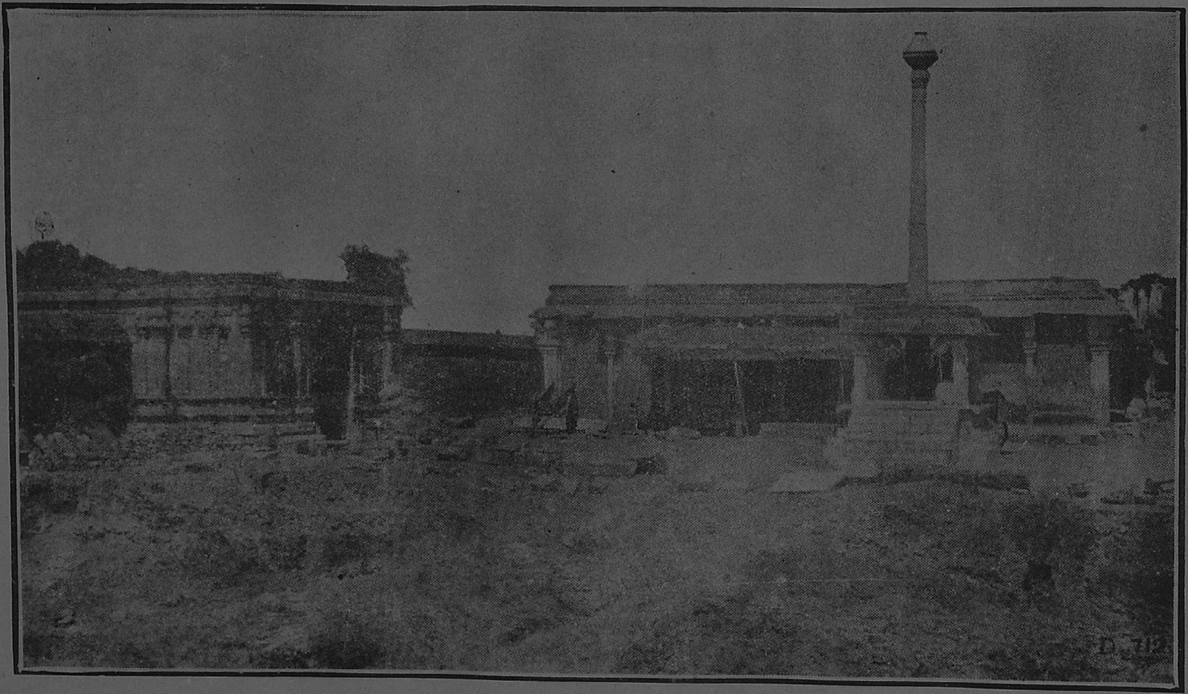

Fig. 4—KARUR Temple, interior view.

great soul that had accumulated great merit in past lives and consequently on being liberated from the fleshy tabernacle of the tiger's body, was able to understand the "why" of things vouchsafed only to great souls. When the cow returned to the place it had gone from, to become a prey to the tiger, it bade her go back to her calf safe and sound, at the same time having vouchsafed increase in cattle and freedom from loss of animals by wild animals to one, who made a gift of a cow to another on that particular day in Bhadrapada.

The places considered specially auspicious for the performance of 'Go-pooja' are TIRUVAMATHUR near Villupuram, a junction on the South Indian Railway, KARUR, in the Trichinopoly District (Figure 4 on page 21) and AVUR and PATTISVARAM in the Tanjore District.

CHAPTER IV.

RATHA SAPTAMI.

The Hindu festival going by the name 'Ratha Saptami' is observed on the seventh day of the bright fortnight in the month of Magha, called also in Tamil '*Tai Masam,*' corresponding to the English month January—February when the sun is in the Makara. Different names have also been bestowed on the festival in question. Some call it 'Magha Saptami' deriving the name from the month in which it is considered auspicious. The word Saptami is derived from the Sanskrit word '*Sapta*' which means seven, and consequently the expression 'Magha Saptami' is taken to mean the seventh 'Tithi'[1] or the day after the 'Purnima'[2] (full-moon) or the 'Amavasya'[3] (new-moon) in the month of Magha. Here it is the seventh day in the bright fortnight in the said month. Some people call it *Jayanthi-Saptami* and others *Maha-Saptami.* The expression Jayanthi-Saptami means the victorious seventh day after the full-moon day and that going by the name 'Maha-Saptami' means 'the great seventh day' in the fortnight. The name Jaya-Saptami originated perhaps from the belief that the observance of this festival brought success in all undertakings and the other, Maha-Saptami, from the importance attached to this Saptami of all the Saptamis in the year, as specially auspicious.

People who subscribe for the 'Helio-centric' system, make the Helios or the sun the power station from which force, vitality, etc., are disbursed to the whole solar system. The sun rules the planets and they in their turn the destinies of man, and consequently the worship of the sun on this

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1. *Tithi* is the time occupied by the Moon in increasing her distance from the Sun by 12 degrees; in other words, at the exact point of time, when the Moon (whose apparent motion is much faster than that of the Sun), moving eastwards from the Sun after the *amavasya*, leaving the Sun behind by 12 degrees. I.C.

2. *Purnima* is the time of full-moon, or that period of time when the Moon is farthest from the Sun.

3. *Amavasya* (literally the 'dwelling together' of the Sun and Moon) is the period of new-moon, or that point of time when the longitudes of the Sun and Moon are equal.

occasion is supposed to influence the planets favourably for receiving beneficial results from them. So a large majority of people do worship the sun on this occasion and the temple dedicated to the sun at the place called SURYANARKOIL (Fig. 5) near Tiruvadamarudhur in the Tanjore District in Southern India is perhaps the only solitary instance of the kind to bear out the statement.

Fig. 5—SURYANARKOIL Temple, interior view.

Just as the images of a bull and Brahmani kite are made to grace a Siva and a Vishnu temple respectively, figures of horses are made to grace the gopuram and the altar-front of a temple dedicated to the sun.

A bull is the vehicle of Siva and a Brahmani kite is the vehicle of Vishnu. Similarly the vehicle of the sun is said to be a chariot drawn by seven horses of rainbow hues or the colours of a solar spectrum.

The sun and the planet Jupiter of the Navagrahas or nine planets (Fig. 6) arem ade to occupy the Garbha-Griha or the womb in the body of the temple,

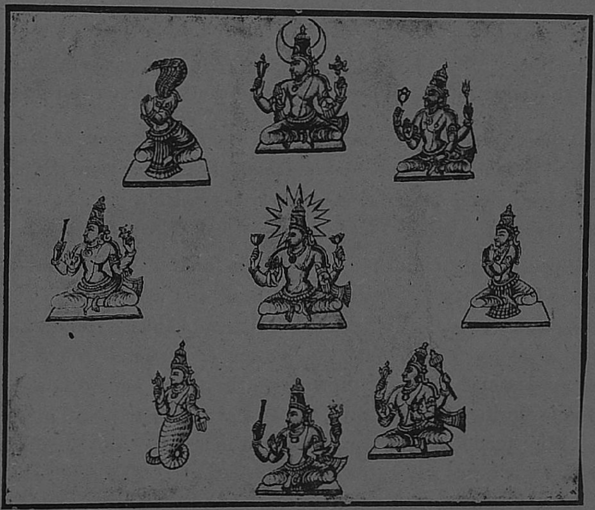

Fig. 6—*Navagrahas* or the Nine Planets.

while the seven planets are located in separate shrines around the court-yard of the temple. From the plan of construction of the temple and the rarity of such temples in the land, one is led to think that the cosmic conception and the conception of the influence radiating from the sun to the planets and the living beings on the earth, were considered by the sages of old to be beyond the comprehension of ordinary men.

We may call the rays radiating from the sun 'Unit Rays.' Each of these unit rays has within it the possibility of the seven coloured rays of the spectrum.

The bundles of rays emanating from the sun, are absorbed by the cosmic centres—the planets—and are then radiated on earth, as bundles of different coloured rays, each planet contributing one variety of colour. All forms in this world have centres in the subtle web of tenuous matter

surrounding and interpenetrating them. The rays from the planets pass through all or some of these centres and converge diffusing a halo of light around the form more or less bright, setting in relief the most prominent colour ray reflected by the form.

The combination of rays of different colours in an infinite variety of ways has caused the conception of diversity in forms. This highly philosophical conception is presented in the construction of the sun temple.

This particular day is considered to be the first day of Vaivaswatha Manu who is said to be the first descendant of Vivaswan the sun as his name implies. This Manu is said to be responsible for the evolution of souls in this solar system.

The peculair custom of people placing a layer of the leaves of the plant '*Erukku*'[1] (*Calotropis Gigantea*) on the head and with that bathe in rivers, deserves examination. It is believed that this plant is symbolical of decay. There is a saying current that the houses of a partial judge and a false witness are destined to be overgrown with this plant, and its flowers are said to be the favourite flowers of Siva, the lord of destruction and of the burning ghats. Why should people place some of the leaves of this plant of such evil repute on their heads and bathe on this occasion? The rationale is simple when properly understood. The nature of plants as well as animals is ever undergoing changes with the change of influence of the planets over the objects on earth. A careful observer might notice this in men, animals and plants. In the pharmacopœia of medical drugs of the Hindu physicians, it is laid down that the drugs would be efficacious only when they are gathered on particular days, at particular hours of the night or the day. The indigo

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1. Sanskrit *arka* means Sun from cuneiform shape of leaf, smooth on the upper surface, clothed with wooly down on the under side, flowering all year. The juice mixed with *uppu* (common salt) is given in tooth-ache; the juice of the young buds is given in ear-ache; the leaves warmed and moistened with oil are applied as a dry fomentation in abdominal pains. Pages 1032 and 1033 of M.A.M.P.

This is a large shrub, common all over India; it is commonly to be found in waste ground among rubbish, ruins, and such like places, flowers rose colour and purple mixed. (There is a white variety also to which great religious importance is attached). Of late years this plant has attracted much attention from the many useful and important purposes to which its several properties can be applied An acrid milky juice flows from every part of the shrub when wounded; and this the natives apply to medicinal purposes in many different ways, besides preparations of the plant itself in epilepsy, paralysis, bites of poisonous animals, as a vermifuge, etc. In almost all cutaneous affections, especially in leprosy, it is frequently employed, and much attention has lately been bestowed upon its virtues in the cure of the latter dreadful complaint. The root, bark, and inspissated juice are used as powerful alteratives and purgatives. Its activity is said to be owing to a principle called Mudarine, discovered by the late Doctor Duncan of Edinburgh, which he found to possess the singular property of congealing by heat and becoming again fluid on exposure to cold. The *root* is used in the manufacture of gun-powder charcoal. Page 120 H. B. T.

dye in the indigo plant is supposed to remain in the leaves only in particular fortnights and the farmers would not cut the plants unless it is the favourable fortnight. Similarly a chameleon has miraculous magical properties in its tail on Sundays, and people cut it on those days, dry it in the sun, enclose it in a cylinder formed of gold leaf and hang it round a child's neck to ward off the evil influences of spirits, etc.

With such beliefs in the background, it is no wonder that people consider the leaves of '*Erukku*' to possess miraculous properties on the occasion, and so make use of them while bathing, as detailed above.

As the sun burns out everything physical slowly but surely by his heat, light, electricity and magnetism, so Siva burns out the desires like lust, anger, envy, malice and so forth. The planets are said to be responsible for the desires in men, and they are most potent during the six months of the sun's southerly course called Dakshinayanam. As this particular festival day happens to be the beginning of the sun's northerly course, the energies of the planets are perhaps paralysed for the nonce, thus making it possible for men to feel the nature of the unit ray of the sun, which would on other occasions be possible only by the steady shutting out of the influences of the planets from entering and influencing men, by using tremendous will power, not possible in the case of ordinary men, and the leaves of 'Erukku' placed on the head while bathing symbolise the burning or the washing away of all sins, such as evil desires in man.

It is also laid down in the scriptures that the Ratha-Saptami day is specially auspicious, if it happens to fall on a Sunday or when the moon enters the asterism 'Rohini' (*Tauri*). Further, the worship of Gowri—Siva's consort—imagining her to be seated on an elephant at the time when the sun enters the asterism 'Hastha' (*Corvi*) is believed to confer special benefits on the worshipper, such as freedom from sickness and sorrow, and immunity from premature death.

Light is knowledge and the sun as the source of light is the source of all knowledge. In the beginning there was only darkness and consequently there was no knowledge and the *Jivas* too were plunged in darkness or ignorance. Then the mighty being, 'Iswara' is said to have created the sun to enlighten the world, on a particular day which is being ever afterwards celebrated as the Ratha-Saptami day, dedicated to the sun.

In a place called 'GANGAIKONDACHOLAPURAM' in the Trichinopoly district the planets are represented in a monolithic car having at their top a lotus representing the sun.

The deities presiding over the planets are said to have worshipped Siva visible to the mortal world as the Sun, at TIRUTHTHENGOOR in the Tanjore district and at TIRUVALLUM near Madras.

The worship of the sun on all mornings in the month of Magha, commencing either from the beginning of the month or from the seventh day of its bright fortnight, goes by the name of '*Nitya Danya Vratha*.'

A handful of rice is set apart every day and the accumulated quantity at the end of the month is distributed among the poor.

There is also another vratha observed to secure lasting youthhood and it goes by the name of '*Bala-Nithya-Vratha*. It consists of an offering of six oblations of handfuls of water every morning followed by six prostrations to the sun.

People also observe another vratha called '*Danapala Vratha*' commencing from the last Sunday of the bright fortnight of this month to secure immunity from poverty and want.

"There[1] was a city in which there lived a poor Brahman. He used to go to the jungle to collect *durva*[2] (*Cynodon dactylon*) grass and the twigs of certain trees for fagots to ignite his sacred fire for worship. He once met some fairies who were engaged in worship. He asked them to explain to him what the nature of the *puja* was. They said that on the first Sunday of the month of Shrâvan (July-August) one should arise from bed without speaking a word, should bathe with one's night-clothes on, should bring water without placing the pot on the floor, should draw the figure of the Sun on a betel-leaf with red sandalwood paste, should draw a whorl with six volutions, should take a twine formed of six threads, should tie six knots in that twine, should offer betel-leaves and flowers to the symbol, and worship it. Finally a married Brahman woman should be fed with dainties and offered clothes or cash. The Brahman performed the *puja* in this manner. The Sun was pleased with him. He became rich. The queen

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1. Pages 1 to 4, H. H. C.

2. The belief is that it possesses the virtue of purifying everything. See also footnote on page 27, F. H.

of the realm sent for him. The poor Brahman was terrified, he shivered. The queen assured him that there was no ground for fear. He was asked to give his daughters in marriage to the prince and to the son of the prime minister. So he did. The Brahman retired to his seclusion after the marriage. After twelve years, he came to the city to see his daughters. He first went to the eldest daughter, who had in course of time become herself the queen. She offered him light refreshments, but he could not partake of them because he had to perform the *puja* of the Sun and to recite the story. The queen, his daughter, said that she had no time to waste; her husband, the king, was about to start on a *skikar*[1] expedition. He, therefore, left the palace, and went to the second daughter. She received him well. She heard his sacred story, she worshipped the Sun as advised, and she prospered. Later on, the king left her *shikar* but lost his way, the queen became very poor,—she lost all she had. She had four sons. On a certain Sunday, in the month of Shravan, her son was sent to her prosperous sister to obtain some help. His aunt received him well and handed him a calabash[2] fruit full of gold coins and jewels. On his way home he met the Sun dressed as a gardener, who forcibly took the fruit away. He returned home disappointed. On the second Sunday, the ex-queen sent her second son to her sister. She received him well, and gave him a hollow stick filled with gold coins and jewels. The Sun, dressed as a cowherd, met him on his way home, and forcibly took the stick away. On the third Sunday the third son was deputed. He got a hollowed-out cocoanut filled with gems. He was told not to part with the nut until he reached home, but he placed it on the parapet of a well in order to draw water, as he was excessively thirsty through the influence of the Sun. The nut rolled down into the well. On the fourth Sunday, the fourth son got some food from his aunt, but the Sun swooped down in the form of a kite and took it away. On the Sunday following, the poor queen went herself to her opulent sister. She also was well received but the younger sister explained to her the folly of neglecting the *puja* of the Sun and allowing their father to leave home without listening to the sacred story. She expressed her regret and began worshipping the great luminary as advised. The Sun was pleased, fortune smiled on her again. The lost king returned home safely. She started for her old capital after thanking her younger sister. At the first day's halt she performed the *puja*

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1. Chase, game or hunting expedition.
2. Kushmand (*Cucurbita maxima*).

and asked her attendants to get some one to listen to her story. A poor dealer in fagots was taken to her. He said he had no time to listen to stories as he had to earn his bread. She took out six pearls, gave him three, and held the other three in her hand while she was reciting the story. The result was that his fagots were turned into gold!! He promised to perform the *puja* and left. At the second stage, a gardener whose well had dried up was brought to the queen. She offered him three pearls and made him listen to her tale with the result that the well was flooded with water and the garden became fertile. At the third stage, an unhappy old woman was brought to her. She gave her three pearls to induce her to listen to the story and showed her how to perform the *puja*. The result was that her sons, one of whom had been drowned, another who was swallowed by a boa-snake, and the third who had lost his way in a forest, all returned alive. She became prosperous. At the fourth stage, a man who had lost his limbs was placed before her. She placed three pearls on his chest, held the other three in her hand, and recited the tale. The maimed man recovered his limbs! At the fifth stage she reached home. She became happy and always performed the *puja* with devotion."

CHAPTER V.

TAI PUSAM.

The Hindu festival, which goes by the name 'Tai Pusam,' is observed on the day over which the asterism Pushya (*cancri*) presides, in the Tamil month of Tai corresponding to the English months January-February. The day generally falls on the full-moon day of the month. The planet *Brihaspati* or *Guru* (Jupiter) is said to be the presiding deity of the asterism 'Pushya' and consequently worship offered to the asterism Pushya is considered to have special merit, since Brihaspati symbolises wisdom and the Hindus consider him to be the preceptor of the Gods, and one of the most important of the seven planets if not *the* important planet. A bath in a secred river on this day is considered to be very meritorious and people of all sorts, both men and women, young and old, flock to the nearest one for the purpose.

The place called TIRUVIDAIMARUDUR in the Tanjore District is one of the important places where this festival is celebrated. There is also a myth describing the way by which the observance of this festival there originated, and it is in brief as follows:—

It is said that before the commencement of the present iron-age of Kaliyuga, and at the close of the silver one of Dvapara, there lived a King in the Chola kingdom by name Hamsa-Dvajan (the king with the flag having a swan embroidered on it).

Of a very religious turn of mind, he thought of going on a tour of pilgrimage to different sacred places such as Benares, Gaya and so forth, but his onerous duties as a king would not permit him to undertake it.

Learning from the Hindu Sastras expounded by wise sages, that a pious Brahmin deputed to make the tour for him would win for him the merit as if the tour of pilgrimage were made by himself in person, he secured the services of one, promising a handsome reward for the undertaking. He further promised that he would look after and take care of the Brahmin's family during his absence.

The Brahmin set out on an auspicious hour with good wishes from one and all, and the King, true to his promise to look after his family affairs during his absence, kept careful watch over the Brahmin's house and his affairs.

Time passed on and nothing noteworthy or important happened, till at last one night, the king while on a nightly peregrination to glean information about his administration, came in sight of the Brahmin's house. Wishing to know what was happening inside, he peeped through the window and saw to his susprise and great anger, the Brahmin's wife in the amorous embraces as he thought of a lover not knowing that it was her own husband who had returned, and whom she was embracing.

As a representative of the Brahmin, the King should do what the Brahmin would have done under the circumstances. In a fit of jealousy, the Brahmin would have killed the Brahmani and her lover. As the lady in question was left in his charge during the Brahmin's absence, he must deliver her safe and sound to her husband, leaving the question of punishment to the husband himself. But as regards the lover, he should not escape the punishment due to the wrong committed. Thus argued the King to himself, and rushing inside the house with his drawn sword he stabbed the poor Brahmin who fell down without a groan and expired.

Discovering but too late, the mistake committed by him in hot haste, the King shed copious tears of repentance and tried to console the widow. Do what he would, the sin of having caused the death of a Brahmin who had gone on a tour of pilgrimage for him, would not leave the King. The spirit of the deceased Brahmin haunted him both day and night. He wandered hither and thither unable to shake himself free from the incessantly haunting spirit, and at last came to a sage named Bargava and sought his advice. Advised by him to visit various sacred places, he made a tour of pilgrimage and came at last to Tiruvidaimarudur. Having bathed in the sacred waters of the well called Sidha-Tirtha inside the temple there, he began to enter the temple itself. When he crossed the second entrance of the temple, he found that he was free from the spirit that was haunting him till then!! The King was much pleased with the result. As he was freed from the haunting spirit on the Tai Pusam day, the King made large gifts to the temple for the annual celebration of this festival.

There is also another myth to emphasise the importance of Tiruvidaimarudur as a sacred place for the observance of the Tai Pusam festival and it is as follows :—

Once upon a time, there ruled in Madura a King named Varaguna Pandyan. While out riding one day he had caused the death of an aged Brahmin unwittingly riding over him and trampling him under his horse's feet. He became the murderer of a Brahmin and a great sinner in consequence. He was further possessed by the spirit of the deceased. He wanted not only to be freed from the sin but also to be rid of the ever bothering spirit of the Brahmin whom he had unwittingly killed. Even the sacred place Madura could not effect this. He tried many other sacred places also, but his trials were of no avail.

One night he had a dream in which Sri Sundaresa, the presiding deity of the Madura temple, appeared before him and wanted him to visit the temple at Tiruvidaimarudur to be freed from his troubles. But that place was in the Chola Kingdom, and the King Pandyan did not like the idea of entering the territory of another King soliciting his favour. While he was at a loss to know what to do, God Sundaresa, the patron of the Pandyan line of Kings, came to his rescue. He told him that the King of the Chola country would invade his territory, but would only meet with defeat at his hands, and flee back to his country being hotly pursued by him, and that that occasion would give him an opportunity to enter the temple at Tiruvidaimarudur.

Everything transpired as Sri Sundaresa had foretold in the dream. The Pandyan King did enter the temple at Tiruvidaimarudur. When he passed through the second entrance of the temple, the spirit[1] of the Brahmin possessing him did not dare to follow him and consequently was left behind.

Finding immense relief, and fearing that the spirit left behind might take hold of him again if he returned by the way he went in, the King made his exit through a back entrance at the west of the temple, and reached a place called Tribhuvanam that was close by. From that place he made arrangements for the annual celebration of the Tai Pusam festival at Tiruvidaimarudur endowing the temple with gifts, since his liberation from the haunting spirit was also effected on the Tai Pusam day.

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1 See also page 66 of S. I. S.

From the above narratives it will be seen that the temple at TIRUVIDAIMARUDUR (Fig. 7) is considered highly sacred by the Hindus. There is a *bael* tree[1] in the temple and people circumambulate it to obtain success in their undertakings. One Vasuman, a King of the Vidhehas (Behar), is said to have regained the kingdom he had lost, by circumambulating this particular tree.

A bath in the river Tamparabarni at TINNEVELLY[2] on the Tai Pusam day is considered highly meritorious for the reason that Iswara had blessed Iswari who was doing penance there on its banks, on the Tai Pusam day.

It is also laid down that Indra, the King of the celestial regions, got rid of his sin on the Tai Pusam day at TIRUPPUDAIMARTHUR in the Ambasamudram taluk of the Tinnevelly district, and consequently the observance of this Tai Pusam festival there is highly meritorious.

Lord Subrahmanyam, the second son of Iswara, is worshipped as Mutthukumara at VAITHISWARANKOIL,[3] on account of his lovely form as a fine youth. His weapon is a lance called *velayutha* and it is said to be an invincible one bestowed on him by Parvati on the Tai Pusam day. Hence people observe this festival at Vaithiswarankoil also, considering the place specially auspicious for the purpose.

The next place where this festival of Tai Pusam is observed is PALNI,[4] the famous place of pilgrimage in Southern India, dedicated to Subrahmanya, the second born of Siva and Parvati, visited every year by thousands of pilgrims of all castes and shades of religious opinion.

On the southern wall of the central shrine in the Mahalingaswami temple at TIRUVIDAIMARUDUR, Tanjore district, is an inscription[5] referring to a gift of land on this festival occasion.

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1. Bael or Bel tree is specially sacred to Siva. It is of middling size, armed with sharp spines. A decoction of the root, leaves and bark is a remedy in several diseases. The mucus of the seed is a good cement for some purposes. It grows all over India, commonly about the temples and all other sacred spots like flower garden, river banks etc.

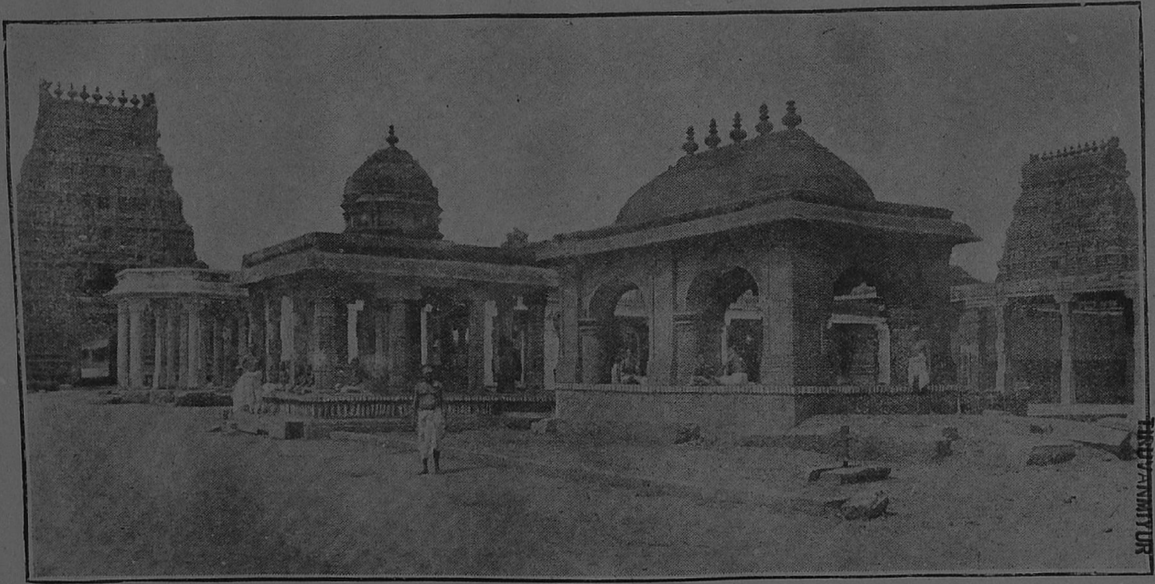
As a rule the leaves consist of 3 leaflets and they often grow in clusters of 2 or 3 on what appear to be arrested branchlets, pages 105 & 106, S. M. T.

2. This place is fully described in Chapter XXXI of S. I. S.

3. Do. do. VIII do

4. Do. do. XXVIII do.

5. This is numbered as 248 of 1907 : M. E. D. (No. 275, page 1270, Volume II, I. M. P.)



TIRUVANMIYUR

Fig. 7—TIRUVIDAIMARUDUR Temple interior view

On the base of the western wall of the Vedapurisvara temple at TIRUVEDIKUDI, Tanjore district, is a record[1] relating to a grant of 13 *velis* of land for this *pushya* festival.

On the eastern wall of the second *prakara* in the Panchanadesvara temple at TIRUVADI, Tanjore district, is an inscription[2] relating to the time of King Bukka II, Saka 1303, Durmati, making a gift of 19 *velis* of land for this festival.

1. I. M. P. No. 1464 E., on page 1425, Volume II.
2. Do. 1505 do. 1428 do.

CHAPTER VI.

MASI MAGHA.

Masi Magha is a festival observed by the Hindus in the month of Magha, called also in Tamil Masi, corresponding to the English months February-March, on a day when the asterism Magha (*Leonis*) holds sway. The day of observance of this festival will generally be the full-moon day of the month Magha referred to above. The deity presiding over the Magha asterism is said to be Brihaspathi (Jupiter) considered by the people to be the preceptor of the Gods also. Hence offering worship to him on this festive occasion is believed to confer on people all the desired-for boons, if it is done in the right way and in the right spirit.

In all the temples of the land, festivals in honour of the presiding deities are celebrated, and people flock to those temples in very large numbers not only to witness the observance of the festival but also to take active part in the same.

There is a mythical statement that Iswara had his initiation at the hands of Sri Subrahmanyan in SWAMIMALAI[1] near Kumbakonam in the Tanjore district on this particular festive occasion. The famous place under reference is situated on the north bank of the river Cauvery and the sacred temple itself is located on a little hillock.

The Goddess of the universe is said to have appeared at one time on this earth of ours, being born as a daughter to a King named Taksha Prajapathi, in the form of a *Sankha* (conch-shell) right-turned (*Turbenella Pyrum*) considered by the people to be an object of rarity, sacred, and capable of bestowing on its owner immense prosperity. The King Taksha is said to have found the beautiful conch on a lotus flower in the holy spot called Kalindhi near Allahabad on the river Jumna, a tributary of the holy river Ganges of the Hindus. When he tried to handle the precious find, it turned into a fine and attractive female child and it was forthwith handed

1. See for further particulars Chapter XII of S. I. S.

Fig. 8—KUMBAKONAM Mahamagha tank with one of the *Mandapas* on its bank.

over to his queen to be taken care of and brought up as their own child!! The divine gift of this child in such a miraculous manner is said to have taken place on a Masi Magha day and consequently the occasion has derived its special importance.

The place considered as the most sacred and important for the observance of this festival in Southern India is the Maha-Magha tank in the town KUMBAKONAM.[1] (Fig. 8). Nine rivers are considered by the people to be most sacred in India and they are, Ganga (Ganges), Yamuna (Jamna), Godaveri, Saraswathi, Narmada, Cauvery, Kumari, Payoshni and Sarayu. The waters of all these holy rivers are said to be present in the Maha-Magha tank at Kumbakonam on this festive occasion and consequently people from all parts of India flock thither to bathe in the sacred tank and get purified of their sins.

The above named rivers are also worshipped as sculptures placed in the temple of God Visvanatha at the northern bank of the Maha-Magha tank itself.

The tank is said to have been in bad need of repairs prior to the *regime* of Govindappa Dikshithar, the Prime Minister of the Nayak Kings of Tanjore. During his time, however, the tank was properly repaired, and as many as sixteen temples were constructed on its banks.

Though gifts are given by one individual, to another or to a large number of people or in support of charitable institutions already in existence or newly opened in every part of the land, yet practice has unique modes of observance by the people in India. Of the many ways of helping people by gifts, the one going by the name of *Tulabhara*[2] is worth noticing. It is not given to the ordinary people to adopt this mode of distributing gifts, since the wealth required is such as to make it possible of observance only by the very rich people. The mode of gift consists in weighing oneself against gold and distributing the precious metal to the deserving poor. At times the gold weighed against, is utilised for building or renovating temples, etc., or for opening charitable institutions.

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1. See for further particulars Chapter XII of S. I. S.
2. For a full description see page 142 of A. S. I. for the year 1912-13.

One of the Nayak Kings of Tanjore is said to have adopted this mode of gift to repair the Maha-Magha temple at Kumbakonam and to build temples on its banks. He weighed himself against gold coins and with the amount he not only repaired the tank but he also caused the erection of the temples on its banks.

There is also a representation in sculpture of this Tulabhara incident of the Tanjore Nayak King, on the bank of the Maha-Magha temple at Kumbakonam, which confirms the facts narrated above.

Besides the sacred stations mentioned above, a bath in Sethu near RAMESWARAM[1] where the two seas Rethnakara (Indian Ocean) and Mahodhadhi (Bay of Bengal) join, or in VEDARANYAM is considered to be of great importance. The river Swarnamukhi at KALAHASTI[3] is also considered a sacred one and a bath in it on the occasion of the Maha-Magam festival is said to bestow on the individual bathing in it special merit.

Though the asterism 'Magham' recurs every month, that occurring in the month Masi is considered specially important. Further the Maha-Magham festival is celebrated at Kumbakonam once in twelve years and that occasion is considered to be important par excellence. People flock to the place from all parts of the land to bathe in the tank and take part in the festival. The year in which such Maha-Magham festival of once in twelve years is observed, is considered not auspicious for certain purposes. People do not generally perform marriages in that year.

We have epigraphical evidence to show that the famous Vijianagara king Krishnadevaraya witnessed the Maha-Magha festival. At the entrance into the north gopura of the Vedanarayanaswami temple at NAGALAPURAM,[5] Chingleput district, is a record of this king himself dated Saka 1445, *Svabhanu* referring to the visit he paid to Aragandapuram (*i.e* Nagalapuram) on his way to Kumbakonam to attend the Maha-Magha festival. An inscription on the north wall of the mandapa in front of the central shrine in the

1. Further particulars are given in Chapter XXX of S. I. S.
2. Do. do. XXI do.
3. Do. do. XXV do.
4. In Kotihar, in Kashmir, there is a fountain which, it is said, continues dry for 11 years, and only when the planet Jupiter enters *Leo*, the water springs out. This position of Jupiter marks the completion of the 12-years cycle of that planet, page 224 H. H. C.
5. This is numbered as 628 of 1904 M.E.D. (No. 700) page 399, Vol. I. M. P.

Uttaravedisvara temple at KUTTALAM,[1] Tanjore district, refers to the gift made by King Krishnadevaraya on the occasion of the Mamangam festival in Saka 1440, *Dhatri* in favour of the temple of Sonnavararivar. On the west wall of the Ganesa shrine in the Nedungalanathasvami temple at TIRUNEDUNGALAM,[2] Trichinopoly district, is an inscription dated the ninth year of the reign of Chola king Rajarajakesarivarman (985-1013) relating to a gift of land for feeding 550 *Sivayogins* during the seven days' Masi festival.

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1. This is numbered as 493 of 1907 M. E. D. (No. 606) page 1306 Vol, II F. M. P.
2. Do. 687 of 1909 do. (No. 553) do. 1579 Vol. III do.

CHAPTER VII.

MAHA-SIVARATRI.

Maha-Sivaratri is a Hindu festival observed on the night of the fourteenth date of the dark half in the month of Magha, called in Tamil Masi corresponding to the English months February—March, in honour of Siva, one of the Hindu Trinity, representing the destructive aspect in the universe. Though generally, the night time is considered sacred and suitable for the worship of the feminine aspect of the deity, and the day time for that of the masculine, yet on this particular occasion Siva is worshipped during the night time, and, as a matter of fact, it is specially enjoined to be observed then. The observance of the Vratha is believed to secure for the devotee immunity from the effects of sin committed either wittingly or unwittingly. The night is divided into four quarters, each quarter going by the name of a *Jama*[1] called also *Yama*[1] and pious people keep awake during every one of it worshipping Iswara.

Fig. 9—Paravati in the act of merging and forming the left half of Linga.

It is said that the whole world was under destruction once and the Goddess Parvati worshipped her husband Siva then and prayed to him that the *Jivas* (living souls) remaining in space like particles of gold dust in a lump of wax during that long period of *pralaya* (deluge) night, should, when they became active once again and are in the enjoyment of their short day and night, have his blessings if they but worshipped him just as she did then, and her prayer was accordingly granted. The night fixed for the worship of Iswara by mortals by Parvati (Fig. 9) was named Maha-

1. *Jama* and *Yama* mean a watch, as measure of time (Sanskrit *Yama* = motion). Approximate actual value, I *jamam* or I *yamam*—English hours. This is generally applied to night hours.

Sivaratri or the great night of Siva, since *pralaya* is brought about by him and hence the period is really his night from the great night or *pralaya* which was the cause for the origin of this Sivaratri.

There are five kinds of Sivaratris in the course of a year and they go by the names Maha-Sivaratri, Yoga-Sivaratri, Nitya-Sivaratri, Paksha-[1] Sivaratri and Masa-Sivaratri. The term Maha-Sivaratri and its origin have already been detailed upon. Nitya-Sivaratri is the daily night of Siva while Paksha Sivaratri and Masa-Sivaratri are Siva's fortnightly and monthly nights respectively. Yoga-Sivaratri is the night which a *yogi* creates for himself by his yoga-trance.

The people who observe this Sivaratri-Vratha take only a single meal during the day previous to the Vratha day and sleep in a clean place during the night. In the morning of the Vratha day they take a bath in the waters of a sacred river like the Cauvery, if one is available, and then go to witness the divine worship in a Siva temple, and at night offer worship to Siva during every one of the four *Yamams*. It is ordained in the scriptures, that those who want to observe the Vratha very scrupulously, should worship Siva with lotus flowers, offer to him a kind of preparation called '*pongal*' which is nothing but rice and green dhal mixed and cooked together, and then be reciting the Rig-Veda till the first *yamam* is over.

In the second *Yamam*, they should worship him with clusters of Tulasi[2] leaves (*ocymum sanctum*), offer a kind of preparation going by the name of '*Payasam*'—a kind of sweet preparation like the soup, and then be reciting the Yajur-Veda till its close.

In the third *Yama*, the worship should be with the leaves of the Bael tree (*Aegle marmelos*) called also Bilvam in Tamil, the offering should be food mixed with sesamum powder, and the recital the Sama-Veda.

In the fourth or the last quarter of the night, the flowers used for worship should be blue-lotus called Neelothpalam or Sengalinir, the offering should be food pure and simple and the recital the fourth or the Atharvana-Veda.

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1. *Paksha* (literally a wing) is the moon's fortnight.

2. This is said to be a great purifier of the atmosphere and the destroyer of mosquitoes. See also footnote on page 123 of S.I.S.

There are also myths emphasising the importance of the worship of Siva during the Sivaratri night and they are in brief as follows :—

Once there was a hunter, and he one day went into the forest to procure meat for his family by hunting some animal. He wandered up and down in the forest from morning till night in search of game but was unable to shoot any. At last, when night overtook him, he climbed up a bael tree to escape from a wild animal that was pursuing him being roused from its lair by the hunter. The animal was lying down at the foot of the tree quite certain that the man would fall down either from sleep or from exhaustion, and that he might eat him. The hunter, exhausted as he was from his exertions and hunger, wished to scare away the animal by throwing handfuls of bael leaves at it. These leaves dripping with water on account of the recent shower, fell on a Siva-Lingam that was near. The night happened to be the Maha-Sivaratri night. He had fasted during the whole day since he could not find anything to eat. The drenching rain constituted a bath and his action of throwing the bael leaves on the Siva-Lingam, the worship of Siva on the Sivaratri night. Though his actions were not intentional to worship Siva, yet he is said to have gained heaven as he had observed the Sivaratri-Vratha though unwittingly.

A Brahmin youth of a very bad character was once banished from his country as a punishment for his evil deeds. One day he was wandering from morn till night without anything to eat. After sunset he reached a Siva temple and entered it. The temple priests had placed before the image of Iswara offerings, but were elsewhere while this youth went in there. Seeing that the coast was clear he wanted to walk away with some of the offerings placed there and eat the same elsewhere free from molestation. As the light placed there did not burn brightly, he could not see the articles placed there clearly. So he trimmed the lamp, and before he could commit theft, was seized by the priests and put to death. He is said to have reached heaven because he had observed Maha-Sivaratri Vratha since the day in which he fasted happened to be Sivaratri day and his action in making the lamp bright by trimming it constituted an offering of the food stuff placed before the image to Iswara on the Sivaratri night.

The basic principle underlying the observance of the Maha-Sivaratri Vratha appears to be to emphasise the fact that death is sure to follow birth, night is sure to follow day, Pralaya, active cosmic life and so on, and

Fig. 10—KALAHASTI Temple *gopura*.

Fig. 11—KALAHASTI Temple *gopura*.

consequently people should always bear in mind while enjoying the one its opposite and regulate their life accordingly. They should not be elated at success nor should they allow themselves to be carried away by despair at failures but always have trust in God and worship him.

The temples considered specially holy for the worship of Iswara on Maha-Sivaratri nights are those at TIRUVAIKAVUR near Papanasam in the Tanjore District, OMÁMPULIYUR near Vaithisvarankoil in the South Arcot District, SRISAILAM[1] in the District of Kurnool and KALAHASTI (Figs. 10 & 11) in the North Arcot District.

On a pillar in the southern porch of the *mukha-mandapa* of the Mallikarjuna temple at SRISAILAM, Kurnool District, is an inscription[2] dated Kali 4505 and Saka 1326, Tarana, *Sivaratri* day, relating to the present of that very *mandapa* by the Vijianagar King Virapratapa Harihara Maharaya II.

On the west wall of the central shrine in the Ratnachalesvara temple at RATNAGIRI, Trichinopoly District, is a record[3] of Chola King Rajaraja (III) making a gift of 1000 *kasus* for the expenses of the *Sivaratri* day.

In the temple of Nagesvaraswami at VIJIAMANGALAM, Coimbatore District, is a record[4] in the 14th year of Virarajendra (1207-52) registering an order for offerings and for 90 lamps on the day of *Sivaratri*.

On the door post of the entrance into the Tambrattiamman temple at SOLAMADEVI, Coimbatore District, is a record[5] in the 24th year of Vikrama Chola (1005- 45 ?) recording gift of money for the *Sivaratri* festival to be conducted in the temple of Rajareja-Isvaram-Udaiyar at Kadappadi *alias* Virasolapuram.

1. This place is fully dealt with in Chapter XXXIX of S.I.S.
2. This is record No. II of 1915 M.E.D. (No. 447 page of 952 Vol. II I. M. P.)
3. Do. 155 of 1914 do. (do 87 do. 1519 do. III do.)
4. Do. 584 of 1905 do. (do 236 do. 544 do. I do.)
5. Do. 242 of 1909 do. (do 490 do. 572 do. do.)

CHAPTER VIII.

SRI RAMA NAVAMI.

Sri Rama Navami is the anniversary of the birth of Sri Rama celebrated by the Hindu devotees in the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) on the ninth day of the bright fortnight when the asterism Punavasu (*Geminorum*) is in the ascendancy. The observance of this *Vratha* is said to absolve one from all sins. Men of all grades and ranks including Kings observe this Vratha for obtaining prosperity, long life, happiness and wisdom. We may say that the festival is universally observed, and Sri Rama is worshipped in every conceivable manner.

The Lord Mahavishnu, one of the Hindu Trinity, representing the preservative aspect of the universe as in his previous incarnations (*Avathars*),[1] descended into the world of men to kill the ten-headed Asura monster named Ravana who was an epitome of the ten *ahamkaras* (egoism) of men. When one is under the sway of the Ahamkaras the power of discrimination between right and wrong is killed in him and consequently the Lord's light has to descend on him to destroy the passions, namely, the Ahamkaras.

Sri Rama (Fig. 12) was a brilliant star of the dynasty of Raghu. The history of his glorious reign is a description of his virtues such as faith in God and *Guru* (the preceptor), parental devotion and worship, scrupulous regard for truth, patience in the midst of difficulties and troubles, mercy for the inferior animals, consideration and great regard for castes, fraternal love, regard for elders, popularity as a king, sound and tactful politics, generosity to, and forgiveness of, sinners really repentant and so on. Every one of the qualities and virtues enumerated above, is proved in his reign.

The famous history of this lord has been known as the RAMAYANA. There is a stereo-typed proverb current in every house, wherein the women when they rock their babies to sleep in their cradles, sing the lullaby the burden of which is, " The name of Sri Rama washes away all sins and the utterance of Sitha's name kills grief."

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1. The importance of the various *avathars* of Vishnu and the shrines dedicated to them are narrated in pages 125 to 132 of "S. I. S."

The epic further fulfils the function of a moral preceptor to the world. It awakens in a son, a sense of duty to his parents. It creates in a wife

Fig. 12—RAMESWARAM, Sri Rama group.

sincere love for her husband. Brothers are roused to the sense of fraternal tie and affection. Kings are made to realise the glory of a golden rule.

Generally speaking, the benefits said to result from a perusal of the epic Ramayana, with deep devotion and reverence to its hero Sri Ramachandra, are as detailed below :—

The issueless are said to beget issues. The poor are said to become rich. The forlorn king becomes a king with a large retinue. The imprisoned get released from prison as proved in the story of Ramadas which is being sung throughout the length and breadth of the land in the form of a ballad. Further, it is also laid down that people disgusted with the temporal concerns obtain spiritual bliss by the devotional study of Ramayana.

The epic under reference is divided into six parts going by the names, *Bala Kandam*, *Ayodhya Kandam*, *Aranya Kandam*, *Kishkindha Kandam*, *Sundara Kandam* and *Yudha Kandam.*

Let us take these parts or Kandams one by one and summarise the events detailed therein.

The *Balakanda* :—In this, Dasaratha, Rama's father, performs a sacrifice-*Yaga*[1]—for obtaining sons making his wives shake off their sterile curse by the merit derived by the said action. Four sons are born to him through his wives. When they reached their youthhood, the sage Visvamitra obtains Dasaratha's consent to take two of his sons Rama and Lakshmana to the forest. On the way, Rama killed an Asura woman, named Thataka He thereafter bent Siva's bow and married Sitha, daughter of Janaka, king of Mithila. He subsequently got the better of Parasurama who challenged him to bend his bow, which feat he accomplished easily and won the same from him. This portion of the epic is intended to throw light on his prowess, love of mankind, hatred for obstinate vice, love for truth and patience in learning archery and other arts of warfare.

The *Ayodhyakanda* :—In this is told how King Dasaratha held a great council and also the story of how he had unwittingly shot in a royal hunt the son of a Rishi, who in anger cursed him that he too should die of grief from separation from his sons. As a result of this curse, Rama, accompanied by Sitha and Lakshmana, had to go into the forest abandoning his kingdom being exiled from it by Kaikeyi, one of Dasaratha's queens. There he got acquainted with a king of hunters named Guha, who was the ruler of Sringaberapura. With his assistance, he crossed the Ganges in a boat, in company with his brother and wife.

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1. From Sanskrit *Yaj*=to sacrifice, consult page 1027 of M. A. M. P.

He subsequently reached the mount called Chitra-koota and dwelt there with his wife and brother having erected a hermitage to live in.

Bharata, in whose favour Rama had resigned his Kingdom of Ayodhya to enable his father to keep up his promise to his wife Kaikeyi, returned from his maternal grandfather's house and rebuked his mother for her conduct in having caused the exile of his dearly loved brothers Rama and Lakshmana and his sister-in-law Sitha by exacting a promise from her husband which also made him die of grief. He then went in search of his brother to request him to return to Ayodhya and rule the country as was arranged by Daśaratha before.

When Rama heard from his brother Bharata about the demise of his dear father, he was sorely afflicted with grief and performed his funeral ceremonies as laid down in the Smrithis. He then consoled his brother Bharata and sent him back to Ayodhya to rule the country till he returned. He also gave him his sandals at his request to occupy the throne, since he said that he would only rule as Rama's representative and not as the absolute ruler of Ayodhya, and consequently desired to have some article of his to pay reverence to and govern the country for him.

In this section, his special virtues such as implicit obedience to his father, and deep fraternal love combined with great goodness of heart, have been brought out.

The other glorious features depicted with great artistic skill here are, the father's grief at the separation from his dearly loved sons and daughter-in-law which resulted in his death, and the fearless devotion to her husband of a devoted wife who was ready and willing to brave everything and to undergo any hardship to be in the company of her lord she loves deeply. Further the true spirit of the brother Lakshmana bound to Sri Rama by deep fraternal affection, very rare and admirable, stands revealed to the world to copy and follow.

The *Aranyakanda* :—In this division of the epic, Sitha requests her lord Sri Rama and his brother Lakshmana not to kill Asuras without sufficient reasons lest sin might result from hasty actions.

Lakshmana disfigures Surpanaka, an Asura woman, in order to put an end to her importunities begging Rama and him to marry her. Then the demons Karadhushanas are destroyed by the brothers.

One day, Sitha is carried off to Lanka[1] (Ceylon) by Ravana. Jatayu, Dasaratha's friend, is mortally wounded by Ravana, when he tried to rescue Sitha from his clutches. Rama, wandering here and there in search of his lost Sitha, discovers the bird Jatayu who tells him of the direction in which Sitha was carried off and then expires.

Having performed the funeral obsequies of his father's departed friend, Rama proceeds southwards towards Lanka as it was the direction in which Jatayu said that Sitha was being carried off by Ravana.

This division is intended to show Sri Rama's love of penance, his great regard for great men and his determination to kill lust and extirpate vice.

The *Kishkindhakanda*:—In this division Rama's stay at Pampa Saras (Humpi) and the destruction of the monkey chief Vali are graphically described, subsequent to his meeting with Hanuman and the resultant compact of friendship with Sugriva, Vali's brother.

Hanuman is sent in search of the whereabouts of Sitha with the signet ring of Sri Rama, to be shown to her in order to convince her of what he said was true in case he was successful in finding out where she was and had a personal conversation with her.

In this division is depicted the spirit of devotion with which Hanuman fulfils the functions of a true and trustworthy messenger. Further the feeling of intense grief and sorrow and trusts in God and in the love of her husband experienced and shown by Sitha, are also described graphically and artistically.

The *Sundarakanda*:—Herein is narrated the crossing of the ocean by Hanuman, the coming out of the mountain Mainaka from the bosom of the sea to afford a resting place for Hanuman when he was flying over the sea in crossing it, remembering the past service rendered to him by Vayu, Hanuman's father, in having helped him to escape from Indra who was clipping the wings of mountains to prevent them from flying from place to place and crushing cities and towns under, by sitting over them. Further

1. Sanskrit Simhala. Simhala is the name by which it was called by the later Buddhistic writers, being a Sanskrit corruption of the original and being lion's abode, hence the modern term Singhalese. A descriptive name for Ceylon in some *puranas* is Ratna dweepam, or island of gems. The Sanskrit Lanka again meaning beautiful was the old mythological name of Ceylon in the old literature of Buddhism and Brahmanism. Page 153, M. A. M. P.

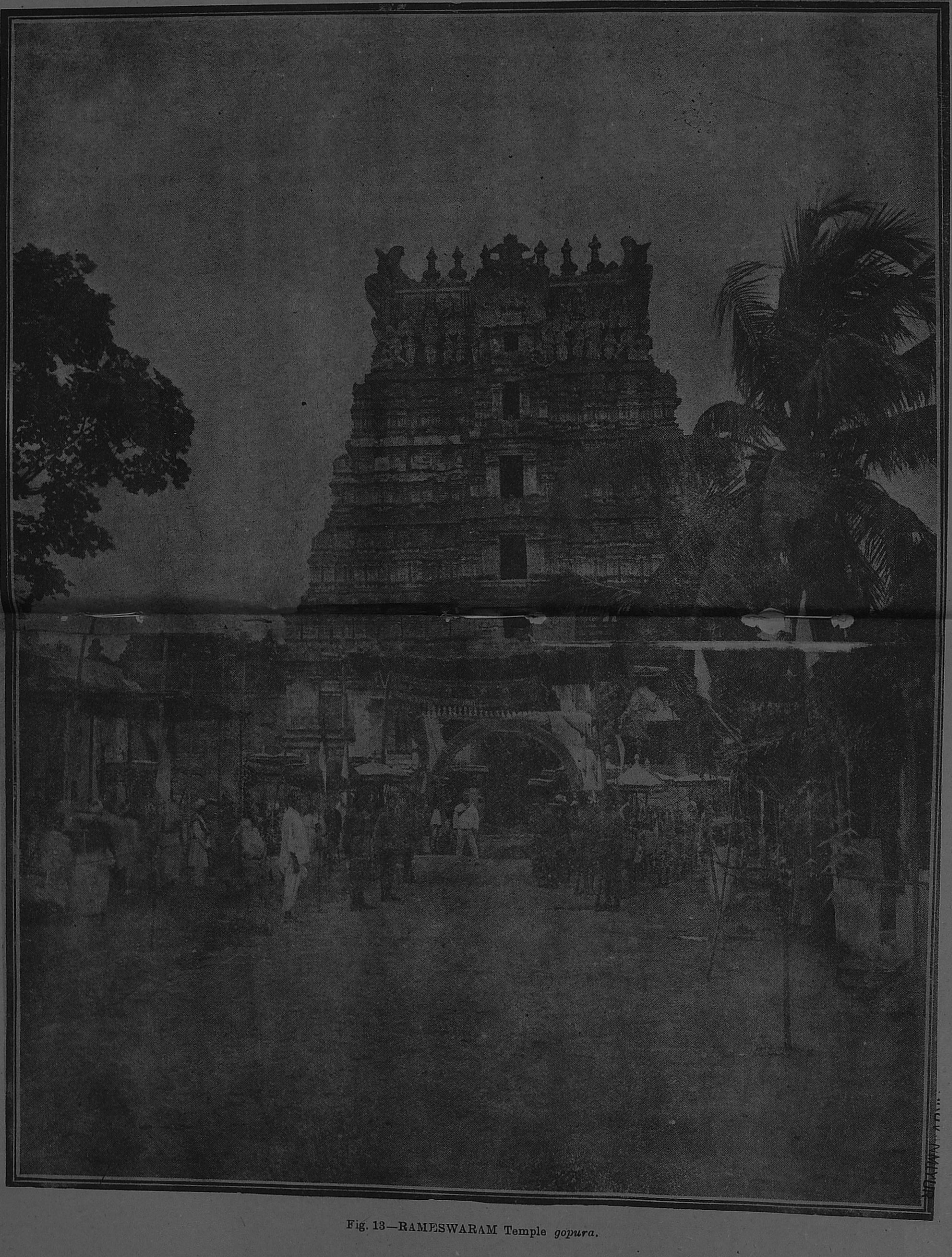

Fig. 13—RAMESWARAM Temple *gopura*.

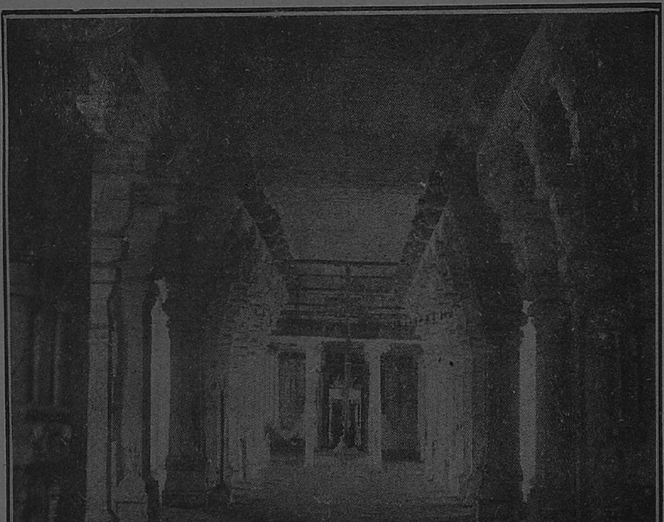

Fig. 14—RAMESWARAM entrance gate.

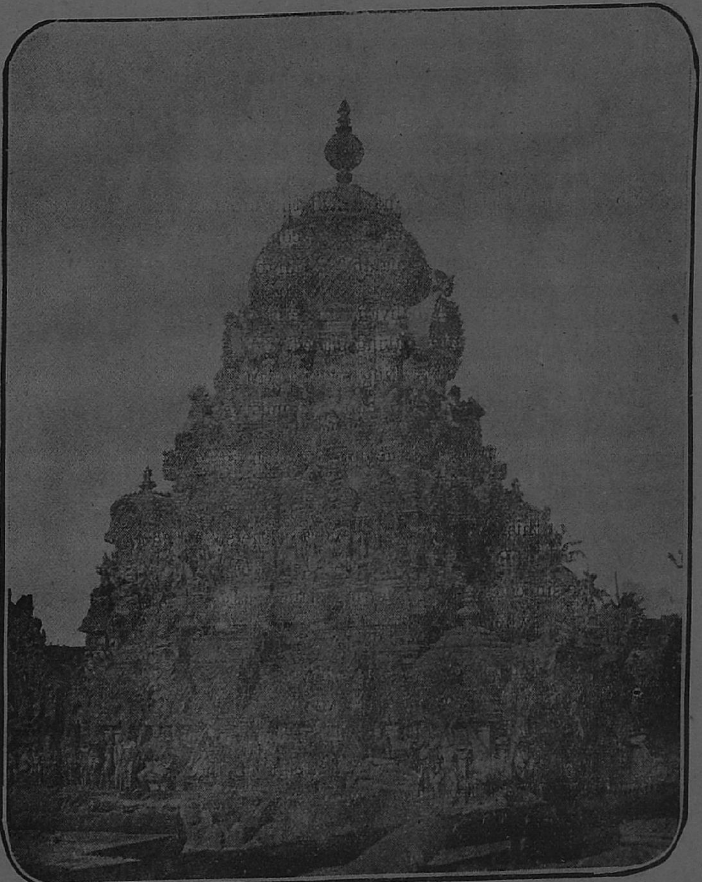

Fig. 15—RAMESWARAM *Vimana* (tower.)

Hanuman entered the island of Ceylon and met Sitha Devi in Ravana's pleasure garden, going by the name 'Asokavanam.' He consoled her after having given her Rama's signet ring and taken from her, some of her hair ornaments to be shown to Rama.

After having shown to Ravana that he treated him and his powers with contempt by having destroyed his favourite resort Asokavanam and his capital city Lanka which was set fire to and burnt to ashes, he returned to Sri Rama, told him of the discovery of Sitha giving him her hair ornament.

The *Yuddakanda* :—In this part is described the construction of the bridge to cross to the island of Lanka from the mainland, Rama's meeting with Vibhishana, Ravana's brother, and the compact of friendship with him, and the final destruction of Ravana and his mighty army of Rakshasas.

Rama then returns to Ayodhya in an aerial vehicle called in those days 'a Pushpaka Vimanam' after having placed Vibhishana on the throne of Lanka in place of the Rakshasa king Ravana slain in battle. He was there welcomed by one and all and crowned king amidst great rejoicings.

A perusal of this portion of the epic gives an insight into the military arrangements of the period.

The hero of this epic Sri Ramachandra of the solar line of kings is said to have installed in RAMESWARAM[1] (Figs. 13 to 15) a Sivalingam as an expiation for the sin committed in having slain a large number of Rakshasas in Lanka and elsewhere.

Near the bottom portion of the eastern wall on the west side of two *prakarams* of the Ranganadha temple at SRIRANGAM[2] is an inscription recording that in Saka 1400 *Manmatha*, Balayyadeva Maharaja gave a village to the God for the celebration of Sri Ramanavami in the reign of Virapratapa Raya. On the north base of the Kothandaramaswami temple at URAGADAM,[3] Chingleput District, is a record relating to the gift of land in *Srimukha*, *Vaigasi*, 28th day to Raghunatha-Perumal at the same village for conducting the Sri Ramanavami festival.

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1. This place is fully described in Chapter XXX of "S. I. S."
2. This is item No. 491, page 1571, Vol. III of "I. M. P."
3. This is numbered as 250 of 1913 in the records of the M. E. D. (Page 351, Vol. 1 of "I. M. P.").

CHAPTER IX.

PANGUNI UTTIRAM.

The Hindu festival going by the name '*Panguni Uttiram*' falls on the full-moon day in the month of 'Phalguna' called also in Tamil *Panguni* (March-April). The moon is then in the asterism 'Uttira' (*Beta Leonis*). Hence the day is considered to be specially favourable for the worship of Siva and consequently is dedicated for that purpose.

The festival is also known as '*Kalyana Vratha*' for the reason that the Goddess Meenakshi is said to have wedded God Sundaresa at Madura on such a day of a particular year.

It is the belief of the Hindus that the people who observe this Vratha are blessed with all boons, provided the observance is whole-hearted and sincere.

The Goddess Meenakshi had her origin[1] in a sacrificial fire in the city of Madura on a day in the Tamil month of *Adi* (July-August), when the asterism Pooram (*Delta Leonis*) had sway; and ruled over that kingdom. She then commenced a world-round expedition starting from the east. While completing the same in the north-east, Siva blessed her and made her a promise that he would go to her capital city and wed her.

She thereupon returned to Madura and was anxiously looking forward for the day when Siva would go over to her to marry her.

Siva kept his promise to her by appearing in her palace on the Adi-Puram day which was also a Monday, and married her in the name of Sundaresa (Fig. 16). From that time forward this festival has come to be observed every year by the people of southern India, not only in the city of Madura, but also in almost all the important religious centres in the country.

The Panguni Uttiram day is supposed to be the turning point of the season from that of cold to one of hot or in other words the season changes from winter to summer.

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1. This forms the 4th story of the 64 sports of Sri Sundareswara (vide page 163 of "S. I. S.")

There is also a story current to impress upon the people the importance of this Vratha and emphasise the same, and it is in brief as follows :—

In the Kritha or the golden age there lived a pious and highly virtuous king named Raghu, who ruled his country wisely and well. There was

Fig. 16—*Kalyanam* (Marriage) scene of the God and Goddess.

neither famine nor sickness during his reign ; nor were there any premature or untimely deaths among his subjects.

In ruling over his kingdom, the dictates of Manava-Dharma-Sastra (Manu-Smrithis) were closely followed by the king.

Though his subjects were contented and happy for a long time, yet there arose a circumstance which upset the equilibrium and made the people feel ill at ease. A *Rakshasi* (female-demon) by name Dundha visited

their houses, troubled their children and was generally harassing them in diverse ways. Unable to shake her and her troubles off, though they tried all the means in their power, they at last came to Raghu, their king, and made representations.

The king thereupon sought the advice of the sage Narada,[1] who directed him to observe this Vratha along with his subjects. By doing this, not only was the Rakshasi Dundha overpowered and got rid of, but there was also increased wealth and prosperity throughout his kingdom.

The temples in which this festival is specially observed are those in MADURA and TIRUVARUR (Figs. 17 and 18) in the Tanjore District as well as those at CONJEEVERAM, VEDARANYAM, TINNEVELLY, and PERUR in the district of Coimbatore.

There is also a myth attached for the importance of the observance of this festival at Conjeeveram and it is in brief as follows :—

On one occasion Parvati, Siva's consort, caused Siva's eyes to be closed by her prowess, and the whole universe was shrouded in darkness in consequence. Parvati is then said to have been cursed and deprived of her privileges and position as the consort of Siva. In order to regain her lost prestige, Parvati is said to have performed a penance at Conjeeveram on this day seated under a mango tree, invoking the blessings of Siva who appeared to her and restored her to her original position.

There is also another festival observed by the Hindus as this festive day and it is called 'The Kama Dahanam' day. The Indian Cupid or God of Love is said to have been burnt to ashes by the wrath of Siva on a particular occasion and the myth in brief is as follows :—

Once, when his consort Parvati was in her father's house attending a sacrifice he was performing, Lord Siva was doing penance with one pointed concentration. The Devas or the celestrial beings, with a view to put an end to the troubles caused them by a demon called Tarakasura, desired Manmatha to disturb Siva's penance and bring him down to their level of consciousness, so that representations may be made to him about the troubles caused by Tarakasura.

1. The figure of this sage is illustration No. 99 on page 233, "S. I. S."

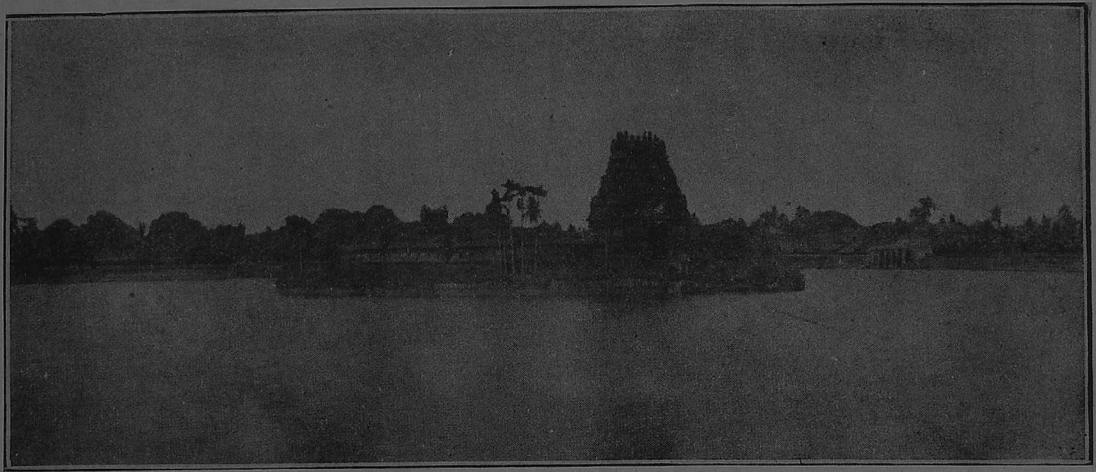

Fig. 17—TIRUVARUR Temple with the tank outside.

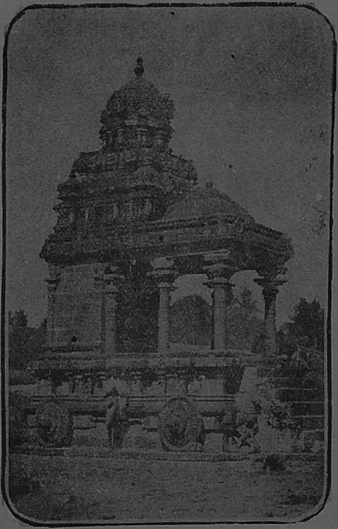

Fig. 18—TIRUVARUR stone car in front.

Prompted by the devas, Manmatha aimed at Siva his arrows tipped with the petals of his favourite flowers, said to be five in number, and thus made an attempt at rousing the sleeping passion of Siva while he was in his Yoga-trance.

Provoked to intense anger, by the action of Manmatha, Siva opened his third or fiery eye and consumed Manmatha to ashes. On account of this incident Manmatha has won the immortal name of '*Ananga*,' that is, 'one without a body.'

Rati,[1] Manmatha's wife (Indian Venus or the Goddess of Love), sore-grieved at the destruction of her lord Manmatha, approached Vishnu and solicited his help, who advised her to go to Sundara Tirtam—a large tank in

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1. Rati is personified as a young and beautiful female, richly attired and decorated, dancing and playing on the *Vina* : and Kama is represented as a youth with eight arms, attended by four nymphs,—Pleasure, Affection, Passion, and Power,—bearing the shell, the lotus, a bow and five arrows, and a banner with the *Makara*, a figure composed of a goat and a fish, or, as before mentioned, the sign Capricorn, (footnote on page 18 of H. F).

front of a Siva temple at Kamarasavalli[1] in the forests of Dandaka between the river Krishna and the island of Rameswaram, and perform there a sacrifice to Lord Siva praying for the restoration of her lost husband.

Rati Devi did as she was advised by Vishnu and underwent severe penance for about forty days.

Siva, pleased with her austerities, restored to her, her husband, but made him invisible to all save herself. He is also said to have ordained that the observers of the Kama-Dahanam festival in honour of Ananga, should win conjugal felicity, be the observer male or female.

Formerly the festival was observed by all classes of people including kings. In course of time, however, it came to be observed only by the lower caste Hindus.

A bronze representation of Rati[2] appealing to Siva exists in the temple of Kamarasavalli in the district of Trichinopoly.

A sculptural representation of the form of Manmatha reborn may be seen in the sanctum of Sri Parthasarathy temple at Triplicane in the city of Madras.

The whole scene of the incidence is well depicted in the portico near the tank in the Ekambareswarar temple at Conjeeveram.

On the east wall of the second *prakara* in the Adipurisvara temple at TIRUVORRIYUR[3] near Madras is a record of the 9th year of King Rajakesarivarman *alias* Tribbhuvanachakravartin Rajadhirajadeva (II. 1172-86) mentioning that this king was present on the occasion of *Panguni Uttiram* festival in this temple.

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1. This forms Chapter XVI in "S. I. S."
2. This is illustration No. 52 on page 86 of "S. I. S."
3. This is numbered as 371 of 1911 in the records of the M. E. D. (page 432, Vol. 1 of I. M. P.)

CHAPTER X.

CHAITRA VISHU. (The Hindu New Year Day.)

The Hindu New Year's Day commences on the first day of the month going by the name *Chaitra* or *Chithirai*. It is also called Chaitra Vishu for the reason that it commences in the month of Chithirai or Chaitra. The occasion is said to be an auspicious one because the Sun then enters the sign Aries of the Zodiac. (Fig. 19.) The people call the occasion Chaitra Vishu Punyakalam[1] or sacred occasion.

Fig. 19—*Surya* (Sun) enters the zodiacal sign.

1. Auspicious time. Any day held sacred on account of the conjunction of certain stars.

The reason why the people in India compute the Indian year from this month when the sun enters Aries—the Ram in the signs of the Zodiac—is said to be one philosophically derived from the science of cosmo-genesis. The Sanskrit word denoting the name of the animal 'Ram' is '*Aja*' which means 'That which is not born.' Therefore the sign of the Zodiac under reference stands for the ultimate cause of everything, and consequently the month in which the Sun enters this sign is rightly considered to be the first month of the year.

From time immemorial, the Hindu conception of an ideal life has been one of sacrifices and religious observances. They consequently desire to be posted with information as to the most suitable time for the observance of particular rites or ceremonies. This information is furnished by the Hindu astrologers and astronomers in their publications going by the name 'Panchangams.'

In ancient times books were very rare and even cudjan[1] leaf manuscripts were not within easy reach of the vast majority of the people of a village; only the chief priest of the village held a copy of the precious manuscript and it was his duty to apprise the people in his village of the date of observance of this or that festival or Vratha. But in the beginning of the year the people desire to know the position of the various planets with reference to the Sun and their effects on men, animals and plants of this earth of ours. They also want to know whether the position of the planets would bring them rains in the proper seasons to adjust their agricultural operations. So the custom of viewing the planetary influence over the earth by a study and the expounding of the statements reduced to writing by the astronomers arose among the people of villages.

The days in this month of Chithirai are generally hot and sultry. When a large number of people assemble at a particular place in hot weather, one must naturally expect arrangements for quenching the thirst and for setting up the still air in motion. Hence arose the custom of presenting people with cool drinks and fans.

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1. From Malay *Kajang* means a dressed nipah palm leaf. The cadjan of talipot and palmyra palms are written on with an iron style for accounts, etc. (page 113 of M. A. M. P.)

There is also the custom of people partaking on this festive day of margosa[1] flowers fried or rather charred and mixed with sugar to be accounted for. Apart from them edicinal effect which this preparation may have on the human system, we may say that this flower belongs to this season and consequently people recognise this flower as the harbinger of the coming season by partaking of a preparation from it.

The custom may also have a deep philosophical significance. The margosa tree rightly symbolises bitterness. Flowers of bitterness blossom forth for the *jivas* to participate with the advent of the new year. Let the jivas make it as palatable as possible and take the happenings during the year as light-heartedly as they could.

Coming to the dry facts relating to the new year, we may say that the Tamilians of southern India arrive at their new year day in accordance with the movement of the Sun and it is the astronomical year which marks the vernal equinox. The Telugu and the Canarese-speaking people follow the lunar or the Luni-Solar systems, which precedes the Tamil new year.

The Malayalis of the west coast follow an agricultural year which is known as *Kollam Andu,* commencing in September when the Sun enters the autumnal equinox. It is in this part of the west coast of southern India that very heavy rains fall for nearly nine months in the year.

Though the day commencing each month is considered to be auspicious yet special importance is attached to the occasions, *Chatravishu, Tula Ravi, Uttarayanam* and *Dakshinayanam.*

The solar year commences from the Sun's entrance into aries—Ram. The beginnings of the solar months are determined by the entry of the Sun into the other zodiacal signs.

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1. *Melia Azadirachta*: Melia from a Greek word, on account of its leaves resembling those of the Manna ash and Azadirachta from the Persian name Azad Durukht 'the excellent tree'. This beautiful tree is common everywhere in India, and is as useful as it is ornamental (pp. 33 & 34 of H. B. T.).

It is said that a certain woman was anxious that her husband should return home soon, when he was preparing to go on a business tour. She sought help from a medical man. He advised her husband to sleep under a tamarind tree on his way out every night during his travels, and to sleep under a neem tree on his return journey. He did so and was soon taken ill owing to the unhealthy acid vapours given out by the tamarind. He therefore did not much prolong his journey. He had to turn back. He slept under the *neem* and by the time he reached home he was quite cured!! The oil of the *neem* is a well-known remedy for leprosy and other skin diseases. During the epidemic of small-pox, festoons of fresh leaves of this tree are hung on the doors of Hindu houses, pp. XXXVI & XXXVII of H. H. C.

The solar years are recorded in the era of the Kaliyuga. Its years are converted into those of the Christian era by subtracting 3101, from the number of complete years that have lapsed since the beginning of the Kaliyuga. Similarly, the corresponding complete year of the Kaliyuga passed, is arrived at by adding 3101 to the Christian year. Further by adding 3044 to the year in the Vikrama era and 3179 to the year in the Saka[1] era the corresponding Kaliyuga year is arrived at.

The lunar month Chandrayanam as opposed to the solar one Souramanam is reckoned from the full-moon to the full-moon. It is invariably determined by the beginning of the bright fortnight of the month, but takes the name of the solar month in which the full-moon occurs.

Each month consists of two halves going by the name of 'Pakshas and each half is a fortnight in the month. The Sukla-Paksha or the bright fortnight is the period of the waxing moon while Krishna-Paksha or the dark fortnight is that of the waning moon.

Each of these pakshas again consists of fifteen Tithis. A Tithi is the time required by the moon to increase its distance from the sun westward by twelve degrees of the zodiac.

As the true motions of the sun and the moon vary with their positions in their orbits the length or duration of a Tithi is also variable.

There are names given to these Tithis of the fortnight and the fifteenth Tithi of the bright fortnight is called the Pournamasya Tithi or the full-moon, while the fifteenth Tithi of the dark fortnight goes by the name Amavasya Tithi or the new-moon. In fact, the full-moon and the new-moon mark the ends of the respective fortnights of the month, bright and dark.

It is also said that the Chaitravishu day or the opening day of the first fortnight of the waxing moon was the occasion chosen by Brahma to launch the visible world of ours into being. Hence this first day of creation is also given the name '*yugadhi*' or the beginning of a yuga.

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1. Saka is the era named after King Salivahana reckoned from A D 78. The word Salivahana is from Satavahanas. A line of Kings of this dynasty is said to have ruled in the north-west of Mysore under the general name Satakarnni and consequently the Mysore state has been spoken of in 1717 as in the Salivahana country. The territory of these Salivahanas extended over the whole of the Dekhan, and Satakarnni is called the lord of Dakshinapatha in the Kshatrapa Rudradaman's inscription. Their chief capital appears to have been at Dhanakataka in the east (Dharanikotta on the river Krishna, now identified with Amaravati in Guntur District); and their chief city in the west was Paithan on the Godavari. M. I

This festive day is said to have acquired further importance by the fact that Sri Ramachandra, the hero of the epic Ramayana, had his triumphal entry into Ayodhya after the destruction of the Rakshasas, and was crowned there on the said day.

There is also an allegorical myth deriving the origin of the Hindu cycle of sixty years and it is in brief as follows :—

The sage Narada had on a particular occasion betrayed his desire for worldly pleasures and in consequence had to take birth in this mortal world as a woman. He is said to have given birth to sixty children and the Hindu cycle of sixty years is said to have had its origin from those children.

The Hindus believe that the twelve signs of the zodiac represent twelve planets in the solar system. These planets are centres of consciousness in the mighty cosmic deity or intelligence, going by the name 'Kalapurusha[1].' In fact, the planets are said to be his head, face, breast, belly, navel, abdomen, genitals, teeth, eyes, knees, ankles and feet.

The Indian calendar is named Panchangam since it is comprised of five limbs, and they are (1) The Tithi, (2) The Varam, (3) The Nakshatram, (4) The Yogam and (5) The Karanam. A man desiring prosperity pays attention to the Tithi. One desirous of long life understands everything about Varam or the days of the week. The Nakshatrams are resorted to to be freed from sins and the Yogam for obtaining immunity from diseases. The Karanam is said to secure for the observer success in all undertakings.

Thus it will be seen that the play of forces or influences from the planets when properly understood and guided can make or mar, protect or destroy according to the use made of them. Hence has arisen the proverb ' Wise men rule the stars.'

"The[2] tradition is that once upon a time Saint Narada, the celestial celebate, saw, while bathing in the sacred Ganges, a pair of fish in conjugal happiness. His passions were excited and produced in him the desire to lead a married life. The happiness of a family and the pleasure of children playing about, and a thousand and one things which make life enjoyable, tempted even this citadel of celibacy, this ever-youthful ascetic. He made

1. There is an illustration of this figure on page 247 of Kalaprakasika, 1917 edition.
2. Pages 98 to 101 of H. H. C.

up his mind to give up his *Brahmacharya* and lead the life of a house-holder. But, he thought, who would give him a wife, and, besides, he had no money to expend on the costly ceremony. What should he do? He thought, he had found out a solution. The best course was to go to Krishna, the King of Dwaraka, and the husband of sixteen thousand one hundred and eight wives!! The Lord of Dwaraka could easily spare one, and would not miss her! And he was so fabulously rich that he could easily pay all the expenses! This unholy thought affected the sanctity of the great saint to a certain extent. God, however, felt himself bound to satisfy every desire of his devotees, and Narada stood at the top of them all! All-pervading Vishnu, therefore, organised a counterplot. Vishnu as Krishna was full of humour. He took no offence even at so insulting a proposal. Noticing that Narada laid much stress on the large number of his wives and hinted at the impossibility of one man meeting them every day, he asked the saint to go round his houses and to pick up that woman with whom he was not living. Poor Narada! He was not in his senses. He took the bait, and actually went round the whole city, but in every house he visited in quest of a "vacancy," he found Krishna present, either playing with the children or enjoying the company of his wife in a thousand and one ways. Always happy, always jolly, always in the enjoyment of the highest blessings possible for a married man! That sight still more excited the passions of Narada. He was still thinking how to get a wife when his time for prayer came. As he always bathed and repeated his prayers very punctually, he involuntarily went to the Ganges to bathe. Narada was thinking of going again to Krishna for a wife when he took another dip, and on coming up to the surface of the water was astonished to see that he was turned into a woman! She (now of course *she*) got out of the stream and was going to change her wet cloth, when, lo! a big tall, stout, manly, good-looking *sanyasi* accosted her. He caught her (Naradi as she must hence be called) by the hand, took her to a cottage and marriage-by-capture followed. She gave birth to sixty sons one after another-one every year! Worried, exhausted, fatigued, bored to death by these numerous sons, she at the end of the sixtieth year involuntarily prayed to Lord Vishnu to relieve her of this worldly misery! Repentance did not come too late for the long, eternal (free from death) life of Narada! The *Sanyasi* disappeared and there appeared in his place the glorious Lord of the Universe, God Vishnu, with four hands holding *shanka*, *chakra*, *gada* and *padma* and said: 'What are your wishes, O eminent woman? They shall be granted!' Naradi looked aghast, looked at the lord again, wiped her eyes and said: 'You know it, my

lord, Fool that I was, I thought married life was a bed of roses, full of happiness and pleasures. Save me, my lord!'

'Rise, dear Narada, rise!' was the response. He was transformed into a fully equipped young ascetic in every detail! The God Vishnu embraced him as a friend and asked him to name any other desire, but by this time the sixty sons had gathered round their mother clamouring for food! Narada appealed to Vishnu to silence them. Vishnu gave them the Raj of the world to be enjoyed by turns for one year at a time. This is how each Hindu year has a separate name for a cycle of sixty years. At the end of this cycl- falls the *Kapila Shasti*, the sacred day on which Naradi was re-transformed into saint Narada!

Here is the list of the sixty sons of Naradi, after whom the lunar years in the cycle are still being called

Prabhav, Vibhav, Shukla, Paramoda, Prajapati, Angira, Shrimukha, Bhava, Yuva, Dhatu, Ishwar, Bahudanya, Pramathi, Vikrama, Vrisha, Chitrabhanu, Subhanu, Taran, Prartiva, Vyaya, Sarvajit, Sarvadhari, Virodhi, Vikriti, Khara, Nandana, Vijaya, Jaya, Marmath, Durmikha, Hemalambi, Vilambi, Vikari, Sharvar, Plava, Shubakrit, Shobhana, Krodhi, Vishvavasu, Parabhava, Plavanga, Kilaka, Saumya, Sadharana, Virodhikrita, Paridhavi, Pramadi, Ananda, Rakshasa, Nala, Pingala, Kalayukta, Sitdharti, Raudri, Durmati, Dundubhi, Rudhirodgari, Raktakshi, Krodhana, and Akshaya.

CHAPTER XI.

CHITRA-POURNAMI.

The Hindu festival going by the name of *Chitra-Pournami* is observed on the full-moon day in the month of *Chithirai* or *chaitra* corresponding to the English month April-May, when the asterism 'Chitra' (*virginis*) holds sway. It is a festival observed to propitiate 'Chitra-Gupta[1]' the chief accountant of Yama, who is believed to record the commissions and omissions of men to punish or reward them after their death.

The conception of Chitra-Gupta and his functions is highly allegorical and needs explanation.

The word Chitra-Gupta means a collection of pictures. That the application of this name to the chief accountant of Yama, the God of Death, is pregnant with meaning, goes without saying.

The present day gramophone proves that though a man might have ceased to exist, his voice might be preserved in matter and reproduced at any time. By a stretch of imagination we can see the possibility of reproducing the thoughts, the feelings and the actions of each and every one of the individuals during their life-time if one but knows how to do it. In fact, there is an arrangement in nature by which every incident in the life of individuals, mental, emotional and physical, are recorded in a kind of very fine plastic matter in space and linked to the centre from which it emanated. The aggregations of these incidents are in fact the account of each *Jiva* in the cosmic ledger so to say. At each birth and death of an individual, adjustments in his accounts are made either in the shape of fresh entries or by the removal of certain entries already in existence. The consciousness controlling this adjustment is 'Yama, the God of Death,' and his accountant Chitra-Gupta stands figuratively for the cosmic ledger of Jivas' accounts of their commissions and omissions, physical, emotional or mental.

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1. This forms illustration No. 6 on page 23 of "S. I. S."

In this month, the Sun shines in all his splendour, and the moon, which borrows the lustre from the Sun, derives the same in full. Hence this day is said to be conducive to the happiness of humanity in general. Further, if the occasion happens to be a Thursday, Saturday or Sunday, it is considered specially auspicious and important.

There is also a myth to emphasise the importance of the observance of this festival at MADURA[1] and it is in brief as follows :—

Brihaspati, the spiritual adviser of the Gods, threw up his appointment, since Indra, the celestial King, failed to show proper respect to him. In the absence of the advice of his preceptor, Indra became a great sinner by his commissions and omissions. After some time, Brihaspati relented and returned to duty. He forgave Indra and pointed out to him how he may become purged of all his sins by visiting several holy places. Indra acting accordingly came to a forest where he found that all was well with him and felt that all his sins were removed. Looking about him to find out the cause of his happy deliverance, he found a lingam near a tank. Being convinced that the influence radiating from it was the cause of the joy of his heart, he at once sent for Visvakarma, the celestial architect, and with his aid had a splendid shrine for the linga erected. He also caused another shrine to be erected near, containing the figure of Iswari, Siva's wife.

Indra then wanted to worship the God Iswara and the Goddess Iswari, but had no flowers. He then prayed to the linga and the image of Iswari, when lo! there suddenly appeared beautiful golden lilies on the surface of the pond to be made use of by Indra in his worship. As the day of Indra's worship of Iswara and Iswari happened to be the Chitra Pournami day, this festival came to be celebrated at Madura in a befitting manner. Even now people believe the statement that Indra visits his former place of worship on the Chitra-Pournami night every year to worship Iswara and Iswari.

The river Chitra which takes its rise on the hills at KUTTALAM in the District of Tinnevelly is said to have made its appearance first on this holy day. So a bath in that river on this occasion is said to confer on people special merits.

In CONJEEVERAM, there is a special shrine dedicated to Chitra-Gupta, the chief accountant of Yama, the God of death. Both the sculpture in the

1. This is the first of the 64 sports of God Sundareswara of Madura and it is detailed on pages 162 & 163 "S.I.S."

sanctum and the metallic image of Chitra-Gupta intended for being taken out in procession, bear in one hand a cudjan leaf manuscript and in the other a style, the necessary paraphernalia of an accountant to record the good and bad deeds of men on earth to enable his master Yama to find out the good and bad souls to award heaven or hell after death.

On a pillar in the upper rock-cut cave on the hill at TRICHINOPOLY[1] is a record of the Chola King Rajakesarivarman (985-1013) dated in his 16th year relating to a gift of land to feed Brahmans and devotees in the nine days' *Chitrai* festival.

On the west wall of the Ganesa shrine in the temple of Nedungalanathaswami temple at TIRUNEDUNGULAM[2] Trichinopoly District is another inscription of the same Chola King Rajaraja Kesarivarman (985-1013) recording a gift of land for feeding 550 *Sivayogins* during the *Chitrai* festival.

1. This is numbered 412 of 1904 in the records of M.E.D. (pp. 1602 & 1603 of I.M.P.)
2. Do 687 of 1909. (p. 1579 of I.M.P.)

CHAPTER XII.

VAIKASI VISAKA.

The festival Vaikasi Visaka is observed on the day when the asterism Visaka (*Libra*) rules in the month of *Vaikasi*[1], called also *Vaisaka*, corresponding to the English month May-June. It is the full-moon day of the month and the celebration of the festival is offering worship to Dharmaputra, the God of death. The day is also said to be one in which God Subrahmanyam incarnated in this world when this asterism Visaka was in the ascendant. Hence this festive occasion is said to be doubly important and meritorious.

Chaturdasi is the fourteenth Tithi either from the Tithi new-moon or full-moon and it is also the fourteenth day from the new-moon day or the full-moon day. If such a day happens to be a Tuesday in any of the dark fortnights, the occasion is said to be specially favourable for the worship of Dharmaputra to free oneself from bodily ailments. Dharmaputra or Dharmaraja, who is worshipped on this occasion, is one of the *Dikpalakas* or guardian angels of the quarters of the earth. He is said to be the guardian of the southern quarter while Indra guards the east. Agni guards the south-east, Niruruthi the south-west, and Varuna and Vayu are the respective guardians of the west and the north-east. Thus we see that the eight directions of the universe are under the control and guardianship of these eight Dikpalakas.

Indra rides on an elephant called Airavatha which is said to be milky white in colour. Heis said to exercise control over all the deities excepting the Trimurtis or the Trinity of the Hindus.

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1. Now the spirit of the time is precisely that which marked a great part of the month of February among the Romans, and the name of the month itself is said to have been derived from its dedication by Numa to Februus, the god of lustrations, for in that month it was necessary to purify the city and pay to the Dii Manes the oblations that were their due. According to some, the name is derived from the verb "februor," to be cleansed or purified. The connexion between lustrations and obsequial rites is another analogy, and consonantly with this opinion, the Feralia, or worship of the Manes, were celebrated for several days in February. ending with the 17th, or according to some, with the 23rd. The month was thence called also the *Feralis Mensis*. This similarity of time and of purposes can scarcely have been accidental, and there can be no reasonable doubt that the Feralia of the Romans and the *Sraddha* of the Hindus, the worship of the *Pitris* and of the Manes, have a common character and had a common origin. Pages 27 and 28 of H. F.

Agni is said to ride on a goat. He carries sacrificial offerings to the other gods in the heavens, causes heat and cold and is said to confer blessings on humanity.

Yama or Dharmaraja, who is the god or angel of death, is said to ride on a buffalo. He judges of the actions of the Jivas on this earth and rewards or punishes them after death, assigning their places, either in the heavens or in hell deciding each case on its merit. He is assisted in his task by his accountant Chitra-Gupta who records the actions of one and all, good, bad and indifferent.

Niruruthi, who is said to ride on a demon, is the chief of the Rakshasas. His function is to award suitable benefits on people in return for the performance of sacrifices bythem to pr opitiate the Gods.

Varuna is the lord of the rains and he is said to ride on a sea-monster.

Vayu, who is said to ride on an antelope, presides over the air and diffuses good and bad scents everywhere.

Kubera rides on a horse and confers wealth of various kinds on those worshipping him.

Esana rides on a bull and exercises general destructive powers.

This is a month in which the days are extremely hot and sultry. Ponds dry up and plants wither away rapidly. Hence the sages of old have laid down that acts of charity such as presentation of cooked rice mixed with curd, followed by cool and delicious drinks during the days of this month, would confer longevity on the children, remove sterility in women, cure various afflictions flesh is heir to and in short would secure for the donor religious merit of a very high order. Presentation of umbrellas, fans and leather sandals as well as the watering of plants and trees in general and Tulasi plant (*ocymum sanctum*) and the Aswatha tree (*ficus religiosa*) in particular, are considered to be acts of great religious merit. Wise, indeed, have been the sages of old, who having understood human nature thoroughly, have laid down rules for the people to follow and religious acts to be observed, conducive to the communal welfare.

Certain places are considered to be specially important for such acts of charity, and SWAMIMALAI[1], near Kumbakonam in the Tanjore district, is one

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1. This is dealt with on page 74, XII of "S. I. S"

of those. It has a myth attached to it for its importance and it is in brief as follows :—

An Asura named Arikesa was giving Indra a lot of trouble. Do what he could, he was not able to get rid of the demon and his troubles. At a loss to know what to do and in great despair, he paid visits to the various religious centres of the land. When he came to Swamimalai referred to above and worshipped the presiding deity of the temple there, he is said to have been blessed with the strength to shake off the demon and win back the kingdom he had usurped!!

The observance of this festival at TIRUMAZHUVADI near Tanjore is considered specially important for the reason that Siva had on one occasion made a *mazhu* or lance dance at this place and the incident is said to have taken place on the Vaikasi Visaka day. Further it is said to be the place wherefrom Siva's sacred bull had its incarnation on this festive occasion.

ALWARTIRUNAGARI in the district of Tinnevelly is the next important place for the observance of this festival. There was a famous Vaishnava saint in that place once, and he was named Nammalwar.[1] He is said to have given to the people the sacred Vedas of the Hindus in Tamil. As he was born on the Vaikasi Visaka day at Alwartirunagari, the observance of this festival there is considered specially meritorious.

There is an image representing the Narasimha *Avathara* (incarnation) of Vishnu, in the hill temple at SIMHACHALAM[2] in the Zamindari of Vizianagaram. On all days of the year, it remains coated over with sandal paste, but on the Vaikasi Visaka day, the paste is scrubbed off and the form is available for view. It is again coated over with a thick paste of sandal to be exposed to view only on the next Vaikasi Visaka day. People flock to this place in large numbers on Vaikasi Visaka day to have a view of the figure since on other days of the year, it is wholly covered with sandal paste.

On the outside of the northern wall of the enclosure of the TANJORE temple (figure 20) is a record[3] in the 6th year of the Chola King Rajendradeva (1050-63) making provision for a daily allowance of paddy to a troop of actors who had to enact the drama *Rajarajeswara-nataka* on the occasion of the

1. For a short summary of this Alwar's life see page of 123 of "S. I. S."
2. This forms Chapter XLII of "S. I. S."
3. This is numbered as 55 of 1893 in the records of the M. E. D. (p. 1408 Vol. II of I.M.P.)

Vaikasi festival. On the rock outside the north *prakara* of the Ratnachaleswara temple at RATNAGIRI,[1] Trichinopoly district, is an inscription relating to the

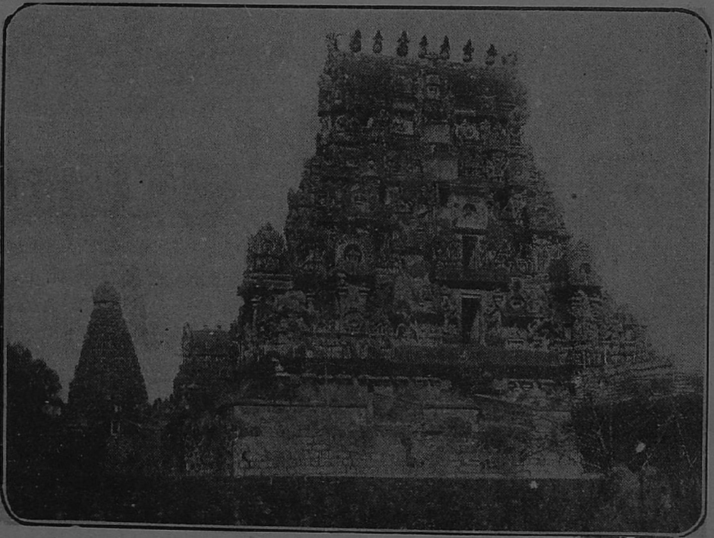

Fig. 20—TANJORE Temple *gopura.*

16th year, 340th day of Tribhuvanachakravartin Konerumelkondan making a gift of land for the festival called *Vaikasi-tirunal.*

1. This is numbered as 171 of 1914 in the records of the M.E.D. (p. 1520 Vol. III of I.M.P.)

CHAPTER XIII.

ADI-PURAM.

This Hindu festival of Adi-Puram is celebrated in all Hindu temples in southern India in the month called Adi or Ashada, corresponding to the English month July-August, when the asterism 'Puram' (*Delta Leonis*) is in the ascendency. The festival is one intended to propitiate the Goddess Sakti Devi who is said to have come into this world on this occasion to bless the people. People therefore worship her to secure happiness not only for themselves but also for those whom they love.

If the Adi-Puram festival day happens to fall on a Friday, the occasion is considered to be highly meritorious, and the people in consequence worship the Goddess then with more than ordinary devotion.

It is said that there are eight *Nidhis* or *Sakties* (Forces of nature) in the universe and they are under the control of the Devi, Goddess of the Hindus. The eight magical arts called in Hindu mystic parlance the *Ashtamaha Sidhis* are derived from a knowledge of those forces. They are (1) *Anima* which is the art of entering into a foreign body, (2) *Mahima* the art of increasing the bulk of one's body, (3) *Garuna* the art of rendering small things tremendously ponderous, (4) *Laghima* the art of lifting with ease the largest and the heaviest substances, (5) *Prapthi* the art of gaining access through a small hole to Brahma's heaven, (6) *Prakamya* the art of transubstantiating and entering into various worlds of tenuous matter, procuring all things needful from these and ascertaining the localities of various substances, (7) *Isathwam* the art of creating, protecting and destroying the world as well as rendering the planets obedient to the will, and (8) *Vasithwam* the art of bringing under subjection one and all created beings Indra and the various Gods included.

The eight *Nidhis*[1] are also called by eight different names with characteristics peculiar to each. The Nidhi called *Padma* is said to be presided over by Lakshmi and people attaining this Nidhi secure prowess and skill in warfare and also command the wealth of all mortals.

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1. These are described on pp. 288 to 291 (Chapter LXVIII) of M. P.

The Nidhi going by the name *Mahapadma* secures the command over all precious gems in the universe, for one having yogic tendencies in him.

The Nidhi *Makara* shapes the character of the individual and secures for him success in military operations and the friendship of kings.

The Nidhi called *Kachapa* brings success in all business undertakings and makes the individual favoured by it, the beloved of one and all.

While the Nidhi *Mukunda* developes in the individual fine æsthetic instincts, that going by the name *Nanda* secures for him crops in plenty and immunity from wants.

The Nidhi *Nila* is said to favour all sorts of enjoyments and *Sanka* self-realisation and eternal bliss.

The two Nidhis *Sanka* and *Padma* confer on individuals mundane enjoyments and heavenly bliss. The wealth secured by Padma Nidhi makes worldly enjoyments possible and the yogic powers conferred by Sanka Nidhi result in bliss arising from self-realisation.

As these two Nidhis control in fact the other Nidhis, sculptural representations of these two Nidhis only are placed at the sides of temple entrances in southern India.

In a portico called 'Ashta Sidhi Mandapam' in Madura, we have sculptural representations of these eight Sidhis or Sakties. The reason for the representation is that the presiding deity of the Madura Temple Sri Sundareswara is said to have manifested these powers in him to the people of this world on a particular occasion and the incidents are given in detail in the book of miracles of Sri Sundaresa going by the name "Halasya Mahatmiyam" called in Tamil "Tiruvelayadal Puranam." Sixty-four[1] miracles performed by Sri Sundareswara are recorded in this work.

It is recorded in a myth that the Goddess of the universe took birth in human form on the Adi-puram day in a miraculous manner. A Vaishnava saint by name Periyalwar[2] of Srivilliputtur had no issues. He prayed to the Goddess Lakshmi for children and his prayer was fulfilled by

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1. A summary of these appear on pp 162 to 173 of "S. I. S."
2. For a life of this Saint consult page 124 of "S. I. S."

her in the following manner. Alwar was ploughing his fields one day as people in those days used to do, and came upon a lovely female child while turning the first furrow. Delighted at the precious find, he hastened home with it, gave it to his wife to nurse, and named it Andal. The child, when it grew up, is said to have been accepted as his wife by Sri Ranganada, the presiding deity of the temple at Srirangam.

The festival is observed with great *eclat* in the temples at MADURA, SRI-VILLIPUTTUR, TINNEVELLY, (Figs. 21 to 23), VEDARANYAM, NEGAPATAM,

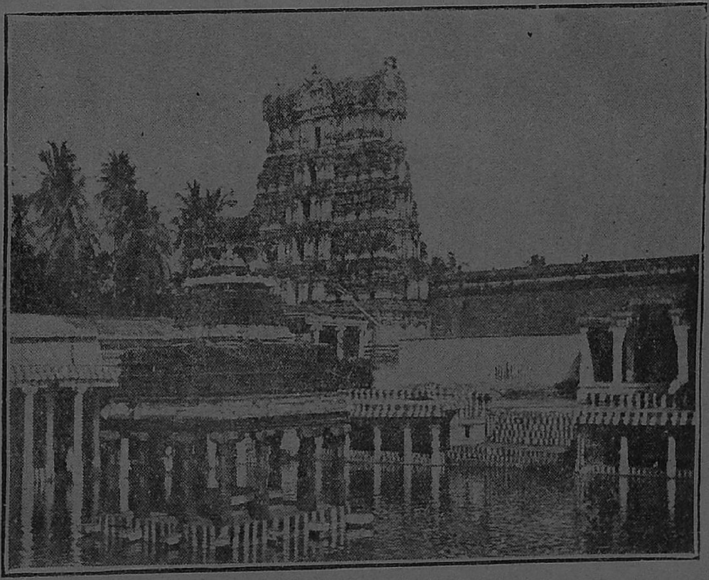
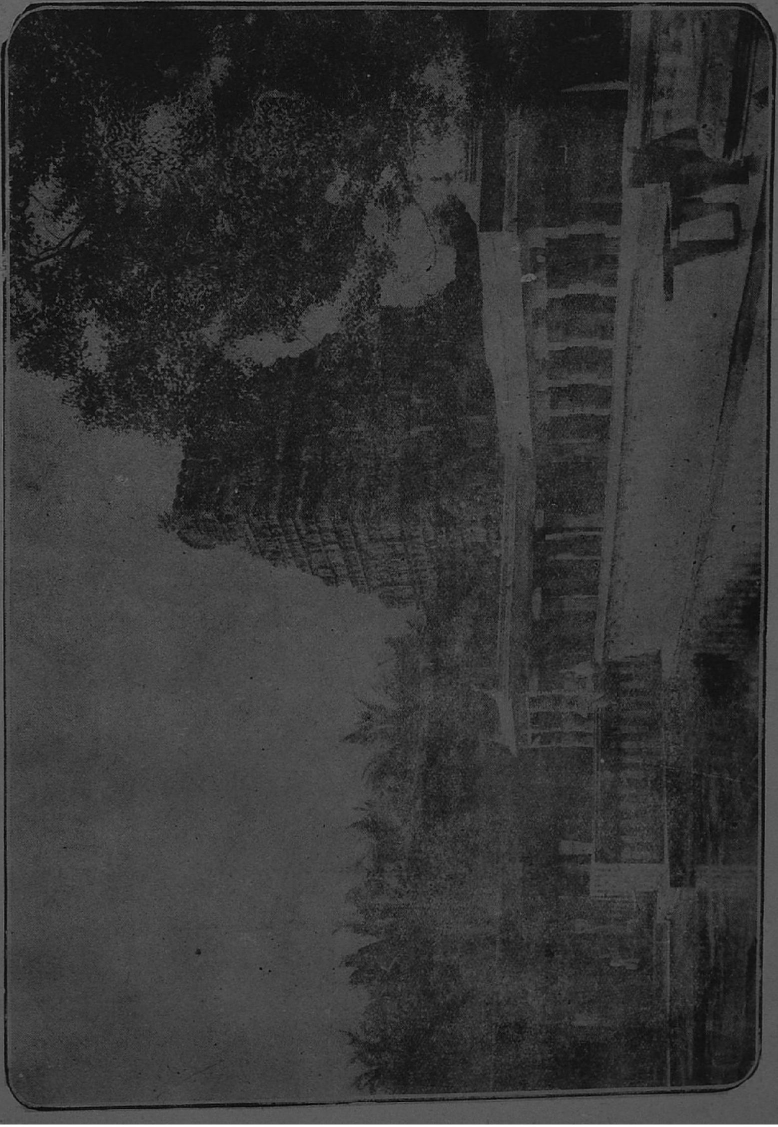


Fig. 21—TINNEVELLY Temple *gopura* with the tank inside.

Fig. 22—TINNEVELLY Temple corridor.

Fig. 23—TINNEVELLY Temple corridor.

JAMBUKESWARAM (Fig. 24), TIRUVADI, KUMBAKONAM, TIRUVADAIMARUDHUR, MAYAVARAM, SRIVANJIYAM and TIRUVANNAMALAI. In the famous



religious centre CHIDAMBARAM also, this Puram festival is observed not in the month Adi (July-August), but in the month Arpisi (November). The observance is said to be rather unique. There is also an inscription[1] recorded in the west gopuram of the temple and it is dated Saka 1517. The village called Poorappettai is made mention of in connection with the observance of this festival as stated above.

It will be seen that all festivals are held only once in a year and no festival is held twice. All the important festivals are observed throughout the country at the same time. As the religious festivals of the Hindus are closely connected with the movements of the stars and planets, correct information regarding the time at which the observation should take place is highly essential if at all the observances are to be efficacious. Hence great stress is laid on the accuracy of the information to be recorded in the Hindu almanacs or Panchangams by the astronomers.

As several systems of computation have arisen with the lapse of time, some following the heliocentric system, and some following the geo-centric system and so on, differences of opinion also have arisen regarding the time of the observance of Hindu rites and ceremonies. But the principle on which these observances are based is the same and we find no differences in opinion there. Further in the observance of most of the important religious festivals, we find no differences of opinion among the astronomers.

The Vedas and the Agamas say that the performance of a definite number of religious festivals is essential for the welfare of a country. The number of such festivals varies with the different sects of Hindus. It is recorded[2] in the second *prakara* of Sri Tyagaraja temple at TIRUVARUR in the Tanjore district that fifty-six festivals are to be observed every year

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1. This is numbered as 360 of 1913 in the records of the M. E. D. (page 147, Vol. 1 of I. M. P.).

2. Do. 269 of 1901 (No. 911, page 1349, Vol. 1 of I. M. P.).

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VYASA PUJA.

Vyasa Puja is a ceremony observed on the full-moon day in the month of *Ashada* called in Tamil *Adi*, corresponding to the English month July-August, mainly for the general welfare of the world. It is a ceremony important more to the *Sanyasins* (ascetics) and others who have renounced the world than to the worldly-minded men. What renouncement of the world really means is that those who have renounced the world have no restricted sympathies, affections and responsibilities which worldly men have in the shape of family ties and responsibilities, etc. They have in fact unrestricted responsibilities to wit the welfare of humanity as a whole. Hence the Sanyasins and others, who have renounced the world and its pleasures, perform Vyasa Puja to draw down on humanity the blessings of the mighty sage Vyasa, the author of the famous Indian epic Mahabharata.

The reason why the Sage Vyasa of all the sages is worshipped by the Sanyasins and others who have renounced the world is that the Adi Sankaracharlar of the Hindus is believed to be Vyasa himself incarnated as that mighty teacher and consequently none deserves the puja better than Vyasa himself. In fact, the people in the know say that the worship of Vyasa is the worship of Adi Sankara and the worship of Adi Sankara is the worship of Vyasa. Anyhow the Sanyasins, as the followers in the footsteps of Adi Sankara, whom they have taken as their 'Guru,' must worship him and they worship him by worshipping Vyasa on the Vyasa Puja day.

The mode of observance of this puja is interesting and worthy of notice. Rice is spread on a piece of new cloth and over the rice are placed lime fruits to draw the presence of Adi Sankara and his four disciples on. After the puja ceremony is over, the rice is distributed to people to be taken home and mixed with the stock kept there. Let us pause to consider what significance might have been attached to this 'modus operandi.'

Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth, is said to reside in rice and new cloths. On auspicious occasions, her presence is invoked on a bed of paddy or rice which forms the staple article of food in the land. Further it has been the time-worn custom of the Hindus that lime fruits (one or two of them) should be taken as presents when paying visits to kings and men in power to solicit favours. So we may say that lime fruits are intended to symbolise success in the undertaking.

In the performance of all ceremonies, we are in need of wealth which is the gift of Lakshmi. We pray for success in the undertaking symbolising the same by using lime fruits. So the 'modus operandi' in a Vyasa Puja ceremony is perhaps for invoking the presence and soliciting the blessings of Lakshmi accompanied by her husband Vishnu praying at the same time for the success in the undertaking.

Two centres of influence were established in southern India, one at Kumbakonam[1] in the Tanjore district and the other at Sringeri[2] in the Mysore State, to perpetuate the memory of Sri Sankaracharyar and this festival is observed with great eclat every year at those places. People assemble there in large numbers from places far and near to witness the performance of the puja and to obtain the blessings of the sage Vyasa.

There is a hall in front of the central shrine[3] of Vidyasankara in Sringeri supported by twelve pillars. The architectural design is such that the rays of the sun fall on each of the pillars in the order of the solar months. Here is a practical problem for the would-be-Hindu yogis to solve and for the advanced yogis to admire.

As the whole ceremony of Vyasa Puja hinges on the great personage Adi Sankaracharyar (Fig. 25), a short sketch of his life and work would not be out of place here. He is believed to have been a sage and a religious reformer. Some even go to the extent of saying that he was Siva (one of the Hindu Trinity) himself born as man. Born of parents—a pious Brahmin named Sivaguru and his devoted wife Aryamba—at a village called

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1. Originally it was in Conjeeveram that this seat was located. It was subsequently removed to Kumbakonam during the days of the Mahratta Kings of Tanjore from this place. The circumstances that led to the transfer of this are mentioned on page 21 of "S.I.S."

2. This place is described in detail in Chapter XLIII of "S.I.S."

3. This forms illustration No. 116 on page 259 of "S.I.S."

Fig. 25—*Adi Sankuracharya.*

Kaladi on the river Alwaye, called also Churni, in Malabar, on a day in the month of Vaisaka, when the constellation Punamasú was said to be highly favourable for the birth of a great soul into this mortal world, this marvellous child grew to become the greatest religious teacher in the world.

The fifth day of the new-moon fortnight in the month of Vaisaka in which Sri Sankara was born, is a red lettered day in the annals of south Indian religious history going by the name 'Sankarajayanthi' day, in commemoration of the birth and religious revival of this great soul. His philosophical treatises are none the worse for the onslaught made on them by rival religious thinkers. In fact, his commentaries on many of the philosophical treatises have resisted the attack made on the treatises themselves and have kept them unimpaired and free from corruption, through long ages of time.

Sri Sankara is said to have received his spiritual initiation from one Sri Govinda Bhagavatpada. He is also said to have made a tour throughout India for the purpose of reviving the religion of the Hindus since he thought that it had become corrupt by the pernicious teachings of certain new religious cults launched into the world by certain men.

Three schools of philosophy have originated in India and they go by the name of Adwaitha, Dwaitha and Visishta-Adhwaitha. Of these, the Adwaitha School of philosophy owes its origin to Sri Sankaracharyar and the other two to Madhwachariar and Ramanujacharia respectively.

Sri Sankara's philosophy put in the nut-shell is simply this. There is only one consciousness and intelligence par excellence in the universe and when the limitations imposed on Jivas by layers and layers of matter are cast off the feeling of separateness ceases to exist and the liberated Jiva (if we can use the word since it shows separateness) feels himself in *all* and *all* in himself.

The Dwaithis of the Madhwa School of philosophy say that there cannot be oneness of consciousness and that Jivas will always be feeling a separate existence from that of the supreme intelligence going by the name God, though there may be several degrees of density in that feeling.

The philosophers of the remaining third school the Visishtatadhwaithis assert the existence of a state of bliss beyond what the Adwaithis are cognisant of.

Sri Sankara is said to have had many disciples and of those, Padmapada, Hastamalaka, Totaka and Mandana-Misra are considered to have been the most prominent. He is said to have visited Prayag and Varanasi, and finally to have brought from Kailasa the abode of Siva, five *Spatika* (crystal) lingas or phallic symbols formed of crystals. They go by the names of *Boga Linga* or the Linga that could confer on the worshippers enjoyments of every kind, *Mukthi Linga* or the Linga that could ensure for its devotee liberation from the wheel of birth and death, *Vara Linga* or the Linga that could confer boons of all kinds, *Yoga Linga* or the Linga that could bestow on souls the bliss resulting in the unification of consciousness of the Jivas and the Isvara, and the *Moksha Linga* or the Linga that could give the extreme bliss going by the name Ananda said to be the birth right of Atma, the soul of human beings. These Lingas now remain located respectively at Sringeri, Kethara-Kshetra, Nepal, Kumbakonam and Chidambaram. Sri Sankara's seat at Sringeri goes by the name of Sarada-Peeta. The reason for the name is that the Goddess of learning 'Saraswathi' is said to abide in that sanctum sanctorum radiating her influence for the welfare of humanity being installed there by Sri Sankara for the purpose.

Sri Sankara is said to have created many influence-radiating centres in southern India choosing many temples for the purpose. Consequently people visiting those temples are said to return home greatly benefited by the magnetic influence pervading the temple atmosphere.

Sri Sankara has written commentaries called *Bashyams* on the works, 'The Bhagavat Githa,' 'The Vyasa Sutrams' and the important 'Upanishads.' These help students to unravel the mysteries contained in those works of abstruse metaphysical problems. Sri Sankara appears to have had two classes of disciples going by the names 'Srothas' and 'Smarthas.' The former were passive listeners because they were new pupils just then admitted perhaps and the latter the advanced and acknowledged disciples, to whom regular instruction and training in Brama Vidhya was given. The Smarthas of the present time are the descendants and the followers of the Smartha class disciples. It appears that the Srothas became Smarthas in course of time by the progress made by them in study.

The word Sruthi comes from *sru*, to hear, and the word *Smrithi* comes from *smru*, to remember. Hence have arisen the works 'The Sruthis and the Smrithis' of the Hindus.

Sri Sankara is said to have visited Badarinarayan, Kedarnath, Nepaul, Ayodhya, Dwaraka and Gokula in Northern India. In southern India he visited Jambukesvaram,[1] Tirupati[2] and Conjeeveram.[3] In the last place, Sri Sankara is said to have designed the plan of the town in the form of Sri Chakra with the temple in the middle.

1. This is described in Chapter XXV of "S.I.S."
2. Do XXXIV do
3. Do II do

CHAPTER XV.

AVANI MULAM.

The religious day of 'Avani Mula' falls in the month of *Badrapada* called in Tamil *Avani* corresponding to the English month August-September. This month and especially this day is said to be under the influence of the asterism Mulam (*Scorpionis*) and its presiding deity is an Asura named 'Nirrithi.'

The Hindus believe that there are two forces or influences working in the universe, one favouring the evolution of souls and the other hindering it. There are intelligences working in both these currents of influences. As the universe is governed by strict justice, certain periods are under the control of one force and certain periods under the other. The night hours between midnight and 4 a.m. are said to be favourable for the play of forces adverse to human spiritual progress. Similarly this month under the influence of the Asura Nirrithi has a preponderance of *Asuric*[1] tendencies not favourable for the progress of human souls. Hence to ward off the harm and evil effects resulting from the Asuric tendencies of the Asura Nirrithi, human beings are advised to lead a religious life which would enable them to find out and cast off from them the germs of subtle evil influences sown into them by the Asuric influences.

There is also a myth attached to the origin of the importance of this event and one version of it is in brief as follows :--

Once, there ruled in Madura a king named Arimadhava Pandya. During his reign[2] there was a great drought and the river Vaigai was completely dry for a long time.

It was believed that Indra, the God of the celestials, displeased with the ruler of Madura had caused the drought in his kingdom. One day, all on a sudden, there happened to fall a short sharp shower and there was a

1. From Sanskrit *as* = to be: life. Demons and giants, who, like the Titans of the Greeks, made war against the gods.

2. This forms the 61st story of *Halasya Mahatmya* (Sanskrit) or Tiruvilayadal Purana (Tamil) which records the 64 sports of God Sundaresa at Madura. See also page 172 of S. I. S.

slight flood in the river in consequence. The king Arimadhana Pandyan wanted to stop the flow of water towards and into the ocean, so that not á drop of the precious water might be lost. This was possible only by arranging to throw a dam across the river. He accordingly apportioned out portions of dam to be thrown across the river, among the people of Madura, since he thought that, that would be the surest and the quickest way to effect the purpose.

A small portion of the dam was allotted to an old dame whose avocation was to prepare and sell pudding and keep her body and soul together with the small profit she made out of her trade. But she was a good and pious woman deeply devoted to Sundaresa, the guardian deity of Madura.

Called upon by the royal ministers to finish the work allotted to her with threats of severe punishment if she made any delay, the old dame was terrified and prayed to Sundaresa, her asylum in troubles, when she could not secure the services of a workman on account of the heavy demand for labourers just then from every quarter of the town.

In the guise of a workman with a basket on the head and a spade in his hand, Lord Sundara hastened to relieve his devotee from her anxiety. Finding a workman almost at her door ostensibly with no work on hand for the day, the old dame approached him with the request to have the portion of the work allotted to her by the king finished by the evening. The dame had no money to give to the workman nor did the workman desire to have money paid to him as wages. All he desired was something to satisfy his hunger, and the dame in great glee promised him as much pudding as he desired. An agreement was come to by which the workman was bound to finish the portion of the embankment assigned to the dame and the dame was to be giving him pudding whenever he came to her for it being hungry after hard work.

The pretended workman ate enough pudding to satisfy his hunger immediately, and carried with him enough to satisfy his hunger if he had any subsequently. When he came to the spot where the other labourers were hard at work, this individual instead of attending to the work allotted to the dame, distributed the pudding among the workmen, chatted with them merrily and was in fact retarding instead of hastening the work of throwing an embankment across the river.

The officials in charge remonstrated with him, threatened him with punishment but to no purpose. Work he would not do, but would boast that he could work wonders. He would often go to the dame with the tale of weariness and hunger and come back to the spot loaded with pudding to be distributed afresh to one and all of the workmen there.

When the sun had set, the work of constructing the embankment was all over except for the small portion allotted to the old dame. Water was escaping through this gap making it broader and broader each minute washing away the adjacent portion completed by the other workmen.

At this juncture, the King was coming on horseback on a tour of inspection of the work done and going on. He halted when he came to the gap through which the precious water was running waste, and blazing with anger asked who the defaulter was. The officials pointed out the lazy workman who was just measuring his steps and was counting them perhaps with the basket on his head containing a handful of earth. The King beckoned to him to appear before him and when he came near dealt him a blow along the back with the cane he carried in his hand. Every living creature there and elsewhere in the world felt the blow given to the workman and writhed in pain!! The King by punishing Lord Sundara punished not only himself but also every living animal on earth, since He abides in every living thing on earth.

When the workman received the smart blow on his back, he dropped the small quantity of earth he held in the basket, at the gap, when lo! there was no gap to be seen in the embankment!!

Stupified with astonishment at the miracle wrought by the seeming workman, the King remained for a moment as if petrified. When he regained his self-possession, he searched for the workman throughout the city in vain for He had vanished from human ken!!

By a flash of intuition corroborated by a voice from the open air, the King knew that the seeming workman was verily his patron Lord Sundaresa come to teach him a lesson for having unwittingly punished his minister Manikkavachakar who had spent certain state funds in the services of the Lord of the Avadayarkoil temple.

The episode of the old dame and her pudding shows the physical link formed between her and the Lord with which she was to be drawn nearer and nearer to Him till she is merged in his all pervading consciousness.

As the incidents narrated in the above myth describing one of the miracles performed by Sri Sundareswarar of the Madura Temple are said to have taken place on the Avani Mulam day, special importance[1] is attached to it.

Though the day is observed as a festive occasion throughout the land, special importance is attached to the centre MADURA (Figs. 26 to 29), the scene of the incidents and consequently the festival is observed there in all its grandeur. With a golden basket and a golden spade[1] the God Sundaresa is taken in procession on this festive day from the river ghat to the temple amidst much rejoicing of the people.

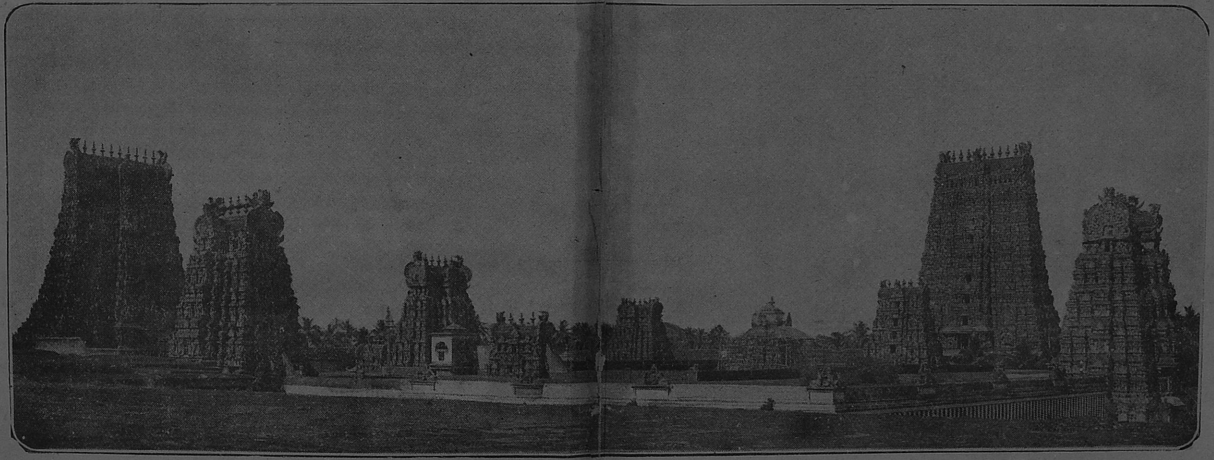

Fig. 26—MADURA: Temple general view.

1. This also accounts for the festival being performed in most of the Tamil districts in southern India.

1. This forms part of the jewels belonging to God Sundaresa at Madura. Most of these are reproduced in Illustration Nos. 84 to 87 of S. I. S.

Fig. 27—MADURA Temple entrance.

Fig. 28—MADURA Temple, Sculptured pillar.

Fig 29—Vandiyur *teppakulan* ide the temple, MADURA.

CHAPTER XVI.

VARA-LAKSHMI VRATHA.

The Hindu festival going by the name 'Vara-Lakshmi Vratha is celebrated on the last Friday of the bright fortnight in the month *Ashada*, called also *Adi*, which corresponds to the English month July-August. It is a festival to propitiate the Goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu, one of the Hindu Trinity. The name Vishnu really means 'pervading everywhere,' and Lakshmi, his consort, is symbolical to represent the forces found everywhere. Eight forces or energies are recognised and they go by the names *Sri* (Wealth), *Bhu* (Earth), *Sarasvathi* (learning), *Prithi* (love), *Kirti* (Fame), *Santhi* (Peace), *Tushti* (Pleasure) and *Pushti* (Strength). Each one of these forces is called a Lakshmi and the eight forces are called the *Ashta*-Lakshmis[1] or the eight-Lakshmis of the Hindus. Vishnu is also called Ashta-Lakshmi-Padhi which is equivalent to saying that he is the asylum for the eight-Lakshmis or forces. In fact, Vishnu representing the preservative aspect of the universe, radiates these forces from him. These forces are personified and worshipped as Lakshmis, since abstract force is not within the comprehension of the ordinary people. As health, wealth and prosperity depend upon the rythmic play of these forces, the worship of Lakshmi is said to be to obtain these three. A woman only can sympathise with women. Lakshmi is a woman. So she will more readily sympathise with women. Hence this festival is observed largely by women invoking the blessings of Lakshmi on them, their husbands and their children.

As in the case of the other festivals, even here myths are pressed into service to emphasise the importance of the observance of this festival on the Friday which immediately precedes or falls on, the full-moon day of the month 'Ashada,' and it is in brief as sketched hereunder :—

On one occasion, Parvathi and Parameswara were engaged in a game of chess[2]. Parvathi was winning game after game, but Parameswara is

1. These are fully described on pages 187 & 189 of S. I. G. G.
2. Sanskrit Chaturanga (*Chatur* = four and *anga* = member).

said to have claimed the victory at each and every one of the games, wantonly, to her intense chagrin. So Parvathi wanted to have an umpire and one Chitranemi, a creature of Parameswara, was chosen. As an underling of Parameswara, he sided with him most unjustly. This provoked Parvathi's anger and she cursed Chitranemi that he should become a leper for having played false to the sacred duty imposed on him as an umpire.

When Chitranemi begged Parvathi hard to forgive him and Parameswara added his entreaties to it, she is said to have relented and modified the curse by adding that he would be cured of his leprosy by observing the Vara-Lakshmi-Vratha, doing which Chitranemi was, it is said, rid of the loathsome disease.

The history of the origin of this Vara-Lakshmi-Vratha is rather interesting. Lakshmi is said to have visited a pious woman by name Sarmadi living in the city of Kundinapura in Magadha (Bihar) in one of her dreams and expressed her satisfaction at her devotion to her children. When she woke up from her sleep, she took a bath and worshipped Lakshmi to ensure her blessings. When the other ladies heard of her dream and her worship of Lakshmi, they too began to worship her, and the custom is then said to have spread everywhere throughout the land in course of time.

The leaves of certain plants and trees are supposed to be the favourite materials for use in worshipping certain deities. The leaves of the bael tree are considered to be specially acceptable to Siva while Vishnu is said to have a partiality for sweet basil-Tulasi plant. Similarly a kind of grass called *Durva*[1] grass in Sanskrit, *Aruhu* in Tamil, Hariali grass in Canarese (*Cynodon Dactylon*), is said to be specially acceptable to Lakshmi. So people gather this grass to worship her on this Vratha day. The ancient alchemists believed that a white variety of this grass was available and

1. This is one of the commonest grasses, growing everywhere in great abundance. It forms the greater part of the food of cattle in this country. It is the prettiest and most lasting grass for planting lawns, etc. Its usefulness added to its beauty induced the Hindus to celebrate it in their writings. Page 238, H. B. T.

It is a sand-binding and bund-protecting grass. It stands heavy rolling. By constantly rolling or allowing people to walk over Hariali lawns the growth of the grass is doubly encouraged, directly by helping the prostrate habit of Hariali and indirectly by hardening the soil and killing all weeds. It grows well and luxuriously in all kinds of soils from a poor light sea-sand to a rich heavy clay soil, provided it gets a good supply of water in the commencement of its growth together with bright sunlight and thorough drainage. No other grass in India has such a wonderful development of root like subterranean stem growth.

using which baser metals could be converted into gold!! This fact perhaps was instrumental in creating in men's minds the belief that the grass was acceptable to Lakshmi. At any rate there is no gainsaying the fact that a decoction of the root of this grass was considered a potent drink to allay the heat generated in the body by *yoga* practices.

As prosperity and adversity are terms antagonistic to one another, so Lakshmi has her contrast in Goddess Ava-Lakshmi[1] who represents adversity. Ava-Lakshmi is always spoken of as the elder sister of Lakshmi. It means that adversity is the elder sister of prosperity. Even in the Puranas it is said that when the ocean of milk was churned by the Devas and the Asuras, Ava-Lakshmi or adversity was the first outcome and Lakshmi the next. Herein is illustrated a sublime philosophical dictum. In the absence of pain, pleasure will have no existence. Unless a man has felt the sun's intense heat, he cannot experience the pleasure of resting in the cool shade. In the absence of hunger, relish for food ceases to exist. Similarly a man feels the pleasures of prosperity because he has experienced adversity before, remembers it and contrasts it with his present position. Hence verily adversity is the elder sister of prosperity.

It is said that people were once worshipping this elder sister adversity. Fearing that she might show her nature to them if propitiated with worship, they are said to have given it up.

This Goddess Ava-Lakshmi has another name 'Kapila Pathni which means 'the wife of Kapila' a sage who married her since no one else would wed her. She is said to reside in pipal trees and so people dare not touch them on days other than Saturdays when Lakshmi is supposed to be present in those trees visiting her elder sister and consequently no harm could come to them as long as she is there to protect them.

Special temples dedicated to Maha-Lakshmi exist in DODDAGADDAVALLI (Fig. 30) in the Mysore Provinces as well as in KOLHAPUR in the Bombay Presidency.

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1. A figure of this Goddess is illustrated in plate 135 together with a description on pages 216 and 217 of S. I. G. G. Also see page 363 of Vol. I, part II of E. H. I.

Lakshmi is said to have worshipped Lord Siva in the temples of TIRUVADI[1] near Tanjore, TIRUNINRIYUR near Vaithiswarankoil, TIRUTHENGUR near Tiruvarur, TIRUVARUR[2] and TIRUPPATHUR in the Ramnad District, and consequently these places are considered to be specially important for the observance of Vara-Lakshmi-Vratham and other Vrathams invoking the blessings of Lakshmi.

1. This forms Chapter XVIII of "S. I. S."
2. do. XIX do.

Fig. 30—DODDAGADDAVALLI Mahalakshmi temple (Mysore State).

CHAPTER XVII.

UPAKARMAM.

A bird is called *Dwija*—twice born since it is first born as egg and then comes out of it as a bird. Similarly a Brahmin is called a *Dwija* since he has the birth of being launched into the world from his mother's womb as well as the birth into the spiritual world by the ceremony called '*Upanayanam*' performed for him by his parents and family *Guru* or preceptor.

The Upanayanam of youths has a deep spiritual significance. With the ordinary physical eyes, men are able to see everything belonging to the physical world. But the Hindus believe in the existence of fourteen *Lokas*[1] (worlds) called also *Talas* and each loka is a world full of conscious entities exactly like this physical world of ours full of minerals, vegetables and animals.

The fourteen Lokas are named Bhur-loka, Bhuvar-loka, Suvar-loka, Mahar-loka, Janar-loka, Tapar-loka, Satya-loka, Brahma-loka, Pitri-loka, Soma-loka, Indra-loka, Gandharva-loka, Rakshasa-loka and Yaksha-loka.

Represented by the expression Tala, they go by the names Átala, Vitala, Sutala, Karathala, Rasatala, Mahathala and Patala, and seven other names.

The end and aim of a human being should be to vivify their consciousness in each and every one of these worlds and work there. Just as they work here in this physical world. This is in fact said to be the summum-bonum of life in this world.

The world 'Upanayanam' means additional eye. By his knowledge of things beyond mundane, the *Guru* (preceptor) becomes an eye-opener to the youth and he begins to see the next higher world. In fact this ceremony was performed to Arjuna by Sri-Krishna in the battle-field. By

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1. Sanskrit *lus* = to see world. Generally means seven upper worlds allotted for the residence of different species of animated beings. Pages 435 and 436 M. A. M. P.

strenuous application day after day, the youth develops this new sight more and more till it is fully open. In this way he is said to open and develop seven sights before completing his evolution.

The thread[1] worn by Brahmins symbolises the play of spiritual forces in his finer bodies radiating the spiritual light around him. The carbon filament within an electric bulb may rightly be compared to this sacred thread worn by the Hindus which in fact represents seven such threads of fire in his seven bodies in as many worlds of fine matter.

It is laid down in Hindu Dharma Sastras that a portion of everything earned or acquired should be distributed in charity. The Brahmins acquire and store up in them only spiritual force which is represented by the sacred thread called '*Poonul*'[2]. So by distributing these sacred strings they are supposed to distribute a portion of the spiritual force acquired by them, during the year. People by wearing the threads given are said to increase the stock of spiritual energy in them.

The Upakarma religious ceremony is performed by the Hindus following the Yajurveda in the month of *Sravana*, called in Tamil *Avani*, corresponding to the English month August-September on the full-moon day if it happens to be free from defects. If the full-moon day in Avani is not free from defects, then the full-moon day in the month of *Purattasi* (September-October) is selected. If even that day be wanting in purity for the purpose then the full-moon day in the month of *Adi* (July-August) is selected.

The people who follow the Rig-Veda observe the ceremony in the month of *Avani* when the asterism Sravana (*aquilæ*) is in the ascendency.

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1. The sacred thread is called in Sanskrit Yajnopavitam (*Yagna* = sacrifice and *upavitam* = thread, i.e., the thread consecrated by a sacrifice). It consists of three strands of cotton, each strand formed by three or nine threads. The cotton with which a thread is made, must be gathered from the plant by the hand of a Brahmana and carded and spun by persons of the same caste. It is hung on the left shoulder and falls on to the right hip. Out of the four castes the Brahmans, Ksatriyas and Vaicyas are entitled to wear it. A child between the ages of 5 to 12 or 13 years is invested with the sacred thread when a ceremony is performed. This gives the neophyte a right to appear before his preceptor to study the vedas and acquire knowledge. The triple cord symbolises, according to some authorities, (1) the three attributes of the Deity, i.e., creation, preservation and destruction (Brahma, Vishnu and Siva), and (2) body, mind and speech and the control over all of them. Footnote 1 on page 61 of F. H.

2. Sanskrit *pu* = to purify and *nool* thread. Holy thread worn on the shoulders of the twice born.

The people who follow the Sama-Veda observe the ceremony in the same month Avani but on the day when the asterism *Hasta* (*corvi*) and the Tithi Panchami prevail.

The recitation of the Vedas on this day is said to be very meritorious. Libations of water are poured to propitiate the manes of the departed souls and the sages who had taken the trouble to preserve and hand over to posterity the Vedas the source of religious, beliefs and ceremonies.

The Vedas are said to have worshipped Lord Siva called Iswara in several places The most important of those places are the temples at VEDARANYAM[1] in the district of Tanjore, TIRUVAZHUNDUR near Kuttalam in the same district, TIRUKKALUKUNRAM[2] in the Chingleput district, TIRUVEDIKKUDI near Tanjore and TIRUPPANAIVASA near Shiyali.

It is said that the sages at one time had the truth conveyed in the Vedas revealed to them by God himself at TIRUVOTTIIYUR near Conjeeveram. The Goddess is said to have had the mysteries of the Vedas revealed to her by Iswara at the place called 'UTTARAKOSAMANGAI' near Ramnad. Further, God is said to have chanted the Vedas at the place called TIRUTHURUTHI near Mayavaram, in the guise of a Brahmacharin youth.

1. This forms Chapter XXI of "S. I. S."
2. This forms Chapter III of "S. I. S."

CHAPTER XVIII.

GAYATHRI JAPAM.

It is a scientifically proved fact that sound arranges the atmospheric atoms into definite shapes. Different sounds create different forms and the forms created by sound retain their shapes for a shorter or a longer period of time according to the strength of sound put forth to form them. The sages of old knew this fact and made long and patient experiments in this direction and noted the effect produced by particular words going by the name of incantations or *Mantrams*. There is a separate science called *Mantra Sastra* dealing at length on this subject. One of these incantations goes by the name Gayathri[1] and every Brahmin is bound to repeat it a number of times at a sitting thrice everyday early in the morning, at noon and at the time of sun-set. The form created by the repetition of this mantram[2] goes by the name Gayathri Devatha.

As soon as a form as detailed above is created it becomes a thing akin to our dynamo, wherein is stored more or less energy both human and divine. The influence radiating from this form or Devatha shields the individual from whom it originated, from all malign and evil influences. If it is surcharged with sufficiently strong energy, it becomes in the hands of its originator a veritable angel ready to carry out even the slightest wish of its master.

Certain occasions are very favourable for creating these forms and surcharging them with energy. The occasion of solar and lunar eclipses are said to be specially favourable for this purpose. The people believe that the first day of the dark fortnight in the month of *Avani* (August-September) is highly conducive to the purpose of producing maximum effect with

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1. The word Gayathri means "that which *chanted saves.*" It is therefore the Eternal *sound*, the word that was in the beginning, the Saviour. This sound pervades the whole universe, yea, it creates, maintains and destroys it. These three aspects of the Logos—the Gayathri, the Song, Saviour, are symbolised above. This is the highest meditation, *hearing* of this cosmic chant—the sruti—is the highest revelation. While meditating on the Gayathri lest us aspire towards this goal. See Note on page 113 D. P. H.

2. For directions see chapter XXII, pages 98 and 99 of D. P. H.

minimum effort. So this day of all the days in the year is selected for Gayathri Japam or the repetition of the incantation going by the name Gayathri a number of times.

This potent incantation of the Hindus going by the name Gayathri is derived from the Rig Veda. The burden of the incantation is that the individual prays to the sun to give him light, knowledge, and energy. In fact he is in the midst of all these but a certain amount of will is essential to absorb and assimilate some of these energies of the sun and the repetition of Gayathri enables him to accomplish it with a more or less amount of success.

The posture most favourable for the easy assimilation of the sun's energies is supposed to be the one facing the sun in the morning when one performs the repetition of the Gayathri mantram. Before the commencement of this *Japam* (prayer.) Pranayaman[1] or the control of breath and rythmic inspiration and expiration are prescribed. This practice makes it easy for the individual to keep the mind centred in the understanding of the meaning of Gayathri more easily than it would otherwise be possible. This concentration strengthens the will and absorbs and assimilates the solar energy and vitality. In fact, when the Gayathri is repeated, the sun is visualised in all his splendour radiating his energies everywhere especially on him. He should also think strongly with one pointed concentration that he is absorbing and assimilating the solar energy becoming in his turn a miniature sun. By constant and continuous repetition of this practice he creates a centre of mighty force himself remaining behind as the source of that centre. The sun we see is in fact such a centre of force originating from a mighty consciousness remaining behind.

The mechanical repetition of the words of the Mantram without attempting to pierce through the veil of words and sucking as it were the sense contained in them, may not produce satisfactory results. To help in the process of keeping the wandering mind more or less fixed, careful counting of the number of times repeated is ordained.

If Gayathri Mantram be not repeated, keeping an account of the ungoing and outgoing breath is recommended to keep the mind concentrated.

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1. This refers to the Regulation of Breathing, page 81 of D. P. H.

People performing this Gayathri Japam sit[1] in a pure and solitary place where detraction is not possible, and repeat the incantations,[2] ten,[3] twenty-eight or one hundred and eight times, as it suits their convenience, and time at their disposal. People should not practise this Japam with breaks and intervals. They should practise it every day during the whole of their life time. If there is a break, then they will make no steady progress but will only be marking time, remaining in the place they started from.

It is laid down that a rosary of twenty-seven, fifty-four and one hundred and eight beads may be made use of, in keeping account of the repetition of the mantram. The rosary may be either of *Rudraksham* or crystal beads. Counting on the fingers and on the joints of the fingers is also resorted to by many.

At the time of performing the Japa feet should not be pressing tightly against each other. The head should remain uncovered and the posture easy and convenient. In mornings, the hand should be placed near the navel, at midday near the heart, and in the evenings near the face. This action facilitates the storage of energy absorbed from the sun.

People performing Japams may sit on a piece of silk or blanket spread on the ground. The skin of a tiger, or a deer is said to be a most suitable thing to sit on and meditate. Mats made of *Darba* grass and planks of all trees and of certain trees in particular are also recommended as suitable. The *Asanas* (seats) should not be made use by others if one wants to preserve the efficacy of the Japam. It is said that even the seats used by one practising the art of meditation are made pure and holy and consequently they should not be rendered impure and unholy by contact with unholy and impure persons or things.

The Gayathri Japam performed not with the aim of personal gain but with the aim of helping the world is said to be a *Yagna* or sacrifice. The benefit resulting from the Gayathri Japam should be placed whole-heartedly and

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1. The *Asana* (seat) may be of a piece of silk spread on the ground, or a blanket, or a skin of antelope, or linen, or wood, or leaves, etc. No one else should use it. The bed, *asana*, dress and drinking vessel should never be used by another—they are pure so long as they are used by one's own self. Page 99, D. P. H.

2. The number of incantations should always be counted; as those performed without keeping any count leads to a state of mental vacuity and passivity which is extremely undesirable. Countless-*Japa* is therefore called *Asuric Japa*. Page 98, D. P. H.

3. The repetition 1,000 times is the best, 100 times is middling and ten times the lowest, at morning. In the evening 30 or 10 times. Page 99, D. P. H.

unreservedly at the disposal of humanity. Then the energy goes to the universal reservoir of such energies from which humanity as a whole is receiving help on suitable occasions to make progress. Temples and other places where people gather in large numbers are chosen to shower the energy from this reservoir by its guardian angels.

The sun according to his various functions is called by various names. He is called Narayana in his preservative aspect. The eight Dikpalakas or guardian deities are in reality his outposts. In meditation, the sun should be conceived in the centre of a lotus flower of light petals representing the eight Dikpalakas. Indra symbolising the desire to do good should be located in the petal in the east. Agni representing sleep, laziness, etc., should be located in the petal in the south-east. Yama representing cruelty should be made to occupy the petal in the south. Niruthi representing sinful actions should be located on the petal in the south-west. Varuna symbolical representation of playfulness should occupy the petal in the west : while Vayu representing travel, adventure, etc., occupies the petal in the north-west. Kubera represents sexual enjoyment and Isana desire for wealth. These must be made to occupy the petals in the north and north-east respectively.

CHAPTER XIX.

KRISHNA JAYANTI.

Vishnu, the preservative aspect of the universe and one of the Hindu Trinity, is said to take birth in this mortal world of ours whenever it is over-burdened with evil-doers and sinners who by their wicked actions upset the equilibrium of the earth. One such incarnation is his birth as the child of King Vasudeva and Queen Devaki Devi of bygone ages. He was then given the name of Sri-Krishna, and his history is recorded in the famous work of the Hindus going by the name of " Bhagavatam."

Born to rid the world of the wicked oppressing the weak and the help-less, he was secretly brought up by the chief of the *Yadhavas*[1] (cowherds) to whom he was taken as soon as he was born, since his uncle by name Kamsa considered him an enemy and so wanted to get rid of him as soon as he was born by putting him to death.

The birth-day of this marvellous child is celebrated as a festive and sacred day on the eighth day of the dark fortnight in the month of *Sravana* called in Tamil *Avani* which corresponds to the English month August-September

The fesitve day goes by different names with different people. Some call it '*Krishna Jayanti* Day.' A few call it '*Janma Ashtami* Day,' while a good many have given the day the names '*Gokula Ashtami* and *Sri Jayanti*.'

The myth relating to the advent of this mighty soul on earth is as sketched hereunder :—

The mother-earth is said to have brought to the notice of God Vishnu, that the population of the earth had enormously increased, that virtue was being trampled down by the tyrannical wicked and that she felt the burden rather unbearable. Vishnu thereupon is said to have consented to rid the

1. The descendants of Yadu—a king. It is a caste title taken by the shepherd tribes.

earth of the superfluous population by destroying the wicked. To accomplish this purpose he took birth on this earth, as the son of a King under the persecution of his brother-in-law, a veritable demon in human shape, but had to be secretly brought up by others to avoid being put to death by his cruel uncle.

He is said to have accomplished the main object of his incarnation on this earth by having punished the wicked and helped the virtuous.

The '*Dharma*[1]' of each indivudual was fixed by him on a permanent basis, and proper arrangements were made for the protection and guidance of the world.

This *avathar* or incarnation of Vishnu is said to be a typical one since he had combined in his divine personality the three aspects of creation, preservation and destruction to demonstrate to the world the oneness of the cosmic deity.

That he was a typical and ideal child is demonstrated by his boyish freaks and escapades described in prose and verse and read and sung over the length and breadth of the lands by thousands of people, men and women, young and old.

His adventures with the *gopis*[2] and the manner in which he made one and all love him shows that he was a youth of marvellous beauty and an ideal lover.

The destruction of the wicked and the masterly manner in which he conducted military operations shows that he was a warrior to the core unparalleled in the annals of any history.

A wise counsellor he assuredly was, is demonstrated by the decision arrived at by the Pandavas under his instructions.

The teachings imparted by him to Arjuna on the field of battle, graphically described in the famous work going by the name of "Bhagavat Githa," reveal him as the greatest philosopher of all ages and times, and a Yogi of the highest order.

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1. Sanskrit *dhri* = to hold ; that which is to be held fast ; ordinance ; charity ; religious merit : justice. One of the four objects of existence ; the other three being—*Artham* = wealth, *Kamam* = pleasure and *Moksham* = absolution.

2. Sanskrit *Gopi* = cowherdess.

Though there are innumerable temples dedicated to Vishnu, the numbers dedicated to his incarnation as Sri-Krishna are few and far between. The reason for this is perhaps that people have taken to worship him through paintings and not through temple images.

The various forms in which Sri-Krishna is worshipped are, (1) The Bala-Gopala Krishna or the baby-Krishna, (2) The crawling Krishna or Krishna as a child on all-fours, (3) Govardhana-Uddhara Krishna or Krishna who uplifted the mountain, (4) Venu-Gopala Krishna or the cow-herd Krishna with the flute, (5) Kalingamardhana Krishna or Krishna in the posture of dancing on the head of a serpent to punish the same for its wickedness and (6) Radha-Krishna and Rukmani Krishna or Krishna in company with Radha and Rukmani.

In the great Mahabharata war, Sri-Krishna acted as a charioteer to Arjuna called also Partha. Hence he derived the name Parthasarathy or the charioteer of Partha. A temple is dedicated to him in this aspect at TRIPLICANE[1] (Fig. 31) in Madras going by the name Sri-Parthasarathy temple and it is one of the important temples in southern India.

There is also a temple dedicated to Sri-Krishna in CONJEEVERAM[2] and it goes by the name Pandavadhoothar temple or the temple of Krishna who went as a messenger of the Pandavas.

The temple in MANNARGUDI in the Tanjore District goes by the name Rajagopalaswami temple and it is dedicated to the memory of Vishnu's incarnation as Sri-Krishna.

There are also temples of this God in the holy place going by the name UDIPI in the South Canara District and at TRIVANJIKOLAM near Iringalakuda on the Shoranur-Cochin State Railway line.

1. This forms Chapter I of "S. I. S."
2. Do II of "S. I. S."

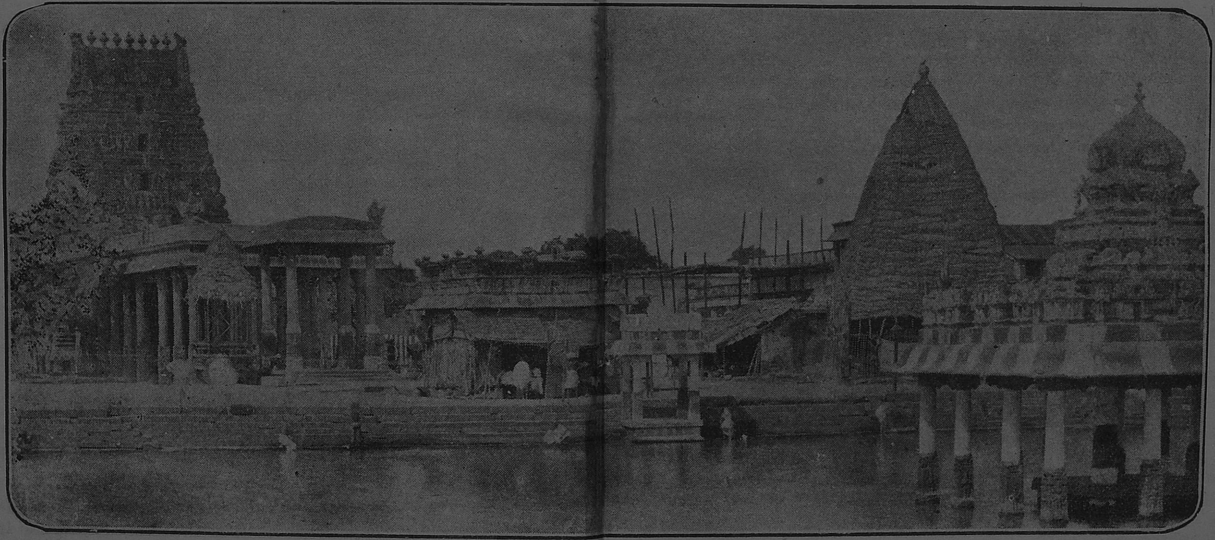

Fig. 31—TRIPLICANE, Sri Parthasarathi Temple with the tank in front

CHAPTER XX.

ANANTA VRATHA.

The Hindu festival going by the name Ananta Vratha is observed on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight in the month of *Badrapada* called in Tamil *Avani*, which corresponds to the English month August-September. The observance of this Vratha is believed to secure for the observer immunity from all sorrows. Some men go to the extent of saying that even a lost situation may be regained by a faithful observance of this Vratha.

The festival is celebrated in honour of Lord Narayana, the aspect of worship being the one prior to the evolution of the worlds and the creation of the living beings.

The word *Ananta* means 'Endless.' Therefore the Vratha called 'Ananta Vratha' is the worship of the deity in his existence without any limitation. In fact, time and space will cease to exist for one who raises himself to this state of consciousness.

The form in which the deity is worshipped on this occasion is a reclining one on the back of a hydra with Sankha and Chakra (conch-shell and wheel or discus, the usual appendages of Vishnu) in his left and right hands respectively.

A serpent or hydra generally symbolises space as well as wisdom. A reclining posture represents the state of inactivity. Hence the form used for worship on this occasion rightly symbolises the period of inactivity called *Pralaya*[1] of the deity with his consciousness unmanifested. While he goes to sleep, everything goes to sleep after him. When he manifests, everything manifests after him. At the time of pralaya the various centres of consciousness going by the name '*Jivas*' are said to be like particles of gold dust in a lump of wax, with the consciousness centred in themselves.

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1. Dissolution. The end of a *Kalpam* or destruction of the world. See pages 716 to 718 M. A. M. P.

Aeons of ages are said to pass by between the commencement of a pralaya period and a period of activity. The period of inactivity is said to be a night for the deity and the long period of activity a single day for him. When he awakes from his sleep or in other words when he begins his activity afresh and manifests his divine potentiality, he shoots a lotus bud out of his navel which blossoms into a flower. From the centre of the flower, the Lord of Çreation 'Brahma' appears and builds up the universe.

The mythical incident referred to above is highly allegorical and it graphically describes the *Anda-Srishti* or the genesis of the cosmos. It deserves to be deeply pondered over.

Lord Narayana, the aspect of the deity worshipped on this Ananta-Vratha day, symbolises the spirit of God brooding over the waters of space or the primordial substances out of which future cosmos or universes arise into existence because of the application of *his* will.

The seven-headed hydra on which Narayana is said to rest symbolises space and eternity as has already been pointed out. The seven hoods or heads of the hydra stand for the seven forces playing in the seven worlds of matter in the universe kept under his domination. Some say that this hydra of Vishnu has only five heads and not seven, deriving it perhaps from the Hindu philosophy which says that a man has only five *kosas*[1] or bodies corresponding to the five kinds of matter in the universe played over by five kinds of forces.

At any rate, as the hydra has only one body there is only one force and consequently only one kind of primordial substance. This force divides itself into seven or five creating as many varieties of matter for the formation of the various universes of finer matter pervading and interpenetrating the coarser ones near. Practical *yoga* consists in reducing the number of these forces playing in and around man and finally merging them into the one force of the cosmic deity in his first abode, and realising the state of consciousness he is in there.

The tantric observances of this Vratha are very interesting and highly instructive. The observer of the Vratha ties round his right arm a cotton band formed of fourteen threads and going by the name 'Ananta Dharam.

1. Sanskrit *Kush* = to embrace. One of the five sheaths of the soul.

The expression conveys to one the idea of the feeling of the observer that he realises for the time being the forces brooding over matter without affecting it at all. Cotton threads are symbolical representations of lines of forces. Learned yogis say that the core within a nerve is a streak of light in a bed of space. The bed of space is the body of Brahma, which is beyond grasp. The conception of a form with only streaks of brilliant lines of light creating a luminous sphere, is the conception of the form of an angel and that of a man in his final ethereal body. Even plants and animals have a web of these lines of forces more or less brilliant causing around them spheres more or less luminous.

The 'Ananta Dharam' or the string to be worn on the Ananta Vratha day is first placed on a *chakra mandala* which is symbolical of health and wealth. At the close of the *puja* it is taken out and worn on the right upper arm.

This aspect of the cosmic deity is worshipped on a day when the moon is in the asterism '*mriga-Sira*' (*orionis*) in the month of Marga-sira to shake off sterility and to get good children. The worship is given the name of 'The observance of Putra-Ananta Vratha.' If human will is centred for a sufficiently long period of time at particular hours or particular days considered favourable for particular purposes, on the attainment of certain desired ends, successful results are sure to follow. A belief in this statement makes people observe this or that Vratha to obtain the objects in view. In fact, the Hindus believed, believe, and will continue to believe that no attainment is impossible to achieve in the three worlds of the universe believed in by them, provided sufficient will power is directed in the direction of the desired for ends.

The chief forms of manifestation of Mahavishnu are four in number, and they go by the names Vasudeva, Sankarshana or Adisesha, Pradhyumna and Anurudha.

Vasudeva is his consciousness in the highest and perhaps the finest form of matter.

Sankarshana is his conscious existence in the next level lower to the above one, and the other two are said to stand for his Sankha and Chakra.

Vishnu is always represented with four hands. In two of his hands, he holds nothing, having them ready to give his blessings. Of the other two which he raises, he holds in the right the chakram or the discus and in the left the Sankham or the conch-shell. These two are symbolical to denote chastisement and punishment of the evil doers.

The ten avathars[1] or incarnations of Vishnu are :—

(1) Varaha-Avathar :—In this incarnation of Vishnu as a boar, he destroys an asura by name Hiranyaksha to recover from him and restore the earth which was stolen and hid under the ocean by him, to its original position.

On the twelfth day in the bright fortnight of the month Magha, (January-February) which is known as Varaha-Dvadesi, the anniversary of this boar incarnation is celebrated.

(2) Narasimha-Avathar :—In this man-lion avathar or incarnation, Vishnu kills one Hiranya Kasipu, an asura, for blaspheming him, having come out of a pillar when challenged by him to do so. He showed by this act of his that he was omniscient and omnipresent.

The anniversary of this avathar is celebrated on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight in the month of Vaisaka when the asterism Swathi (*bootis*) is entered into by the moon.

After the destruction of Hiranya Kasipu, Narasimha did not abate his terrific nature. So the devas were considerably alarmed. In order to mitigate the fury of Narasimha, Iswara is said to have assumed the Sarabha[2] form. People believe that the worship of this form would secure for them success over enemies in battles and immunity from diseases.

(3) Vamana-Avathar :—In this dwarf avathar, Lord Vishnu is said to have humbled the pride of Mahabali, a king who had usurped even the kingdom of Indra, the God of the heavens, by his prowess. He begged of Bali as a gift three feet of soil, and when that was promised, he assumed a huge form going by the name of Trivikrama form and measured the whole of the heavens by one foot and the whole earth by the second. For the

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1. For detailed information see pages 125 to 132 of S.I.S.
2. Page 252 of S.I.S.

third foot of land, he placed his mighty foot on the head of Bali and pushed him into the nether world. Bali's life was spared as he was not thoroughly bad.

The worship of Vamana in the *lagna*[1] or hours of the day going by the name Vrichika-Lagna on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight in the month of Badrapadha is said to confer on the worshipper a prosperous life and success in all the undertakings. If the day happens to be a Sunday with the asterism Sravana (*aquitœ*) ruling over it, it is said to be specially favourable for the purpose.

(4) Parasurama-Avathar :—In this axe-bearing incaration Vishnu is said to have extirpated the Kshatriya race of asuric origin and exercised sovereignty in Malabar.

(5) Rama-Avathar :—In this arrow-bearing avathar or incarnation Vishnu is said to have killed Ravana, the king of the Rakshasas of Ceylon or Lanka. The incidents relating to this are recorded in the famous Hindu epic 'Ramayana' emphasising the moral dictum 'Though vice triumphs in the beginning, virtue would in the end crush it down and prosper.'

(6) Krishna-Avathar :—The lovely sky-complexioned Krishna is said to have killed the vicious king Kamsa who was his maternal uncle.

(7) Matsya-Avathar :—In this incarnation as a fish, Vishnu is said to have destroyed an asura or demon who had stolen from Brahma, the creator, the four Vedas. Vishnu is said to have recovered these Vedas from the bottom of the ocean where they were hid by the asura and restored them to Brahma to his intense delight.

(8) Kurma-Avathar :—This form of tortoise is said to have been used as a place of rest for the mountain Mandara used as a churning rod by the devas and the asuras when they churned the ocean of milk to obtain from it 'nectar' drinking which one is said to become immortal.

The anniversary of this avathar or incarnation is celebrated on the *Akshaya-Trithiya* day in the bright fortnight of the month Vaisaka, April-May.

(9) Balarama-Avathar :—This incarnation is said to be but the dual aspect of the avathar of Vishnu as Sri Krishna of Dvaraka. Many asuras

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1. Sanskrit *lag* = to adhere; contact; point of contact or intersection of two lines. The rising of a sign of the Zodiac above the horizon.

are said to have been destroyed by Vishnu in this incarnation also as his own brother when he was born as Krishna and killed Kamsa.

(10) Kalki-Avathar :—This horse-faced incarnation is yet to take place at the end of the running Kali Yuga.

Of the numerous temples famous for these various avathars of Vishnu SRIMUSHNAM in the South Arcot district is famous for the avathar named Varaha avathar, SINGAPERUMALKOIL near Chingleput and SIMHACHALAM near Waltair are noted for the Narasimha or Man-lion avathar.

TIRUKKOILUR in the South Arcot district is dedicated to Tiruvikrama avathar referred to in the incidents relating to Vamana Avathar.

The temple of Anandapadmanabhaswami in the city TRIVANDRUM of the State of Travancore is said to be built in memory of the Parasurama avathar.

The temple going by the name of Parthasarathy temple in TRIPLICANE in the city of Madras commemorates the avathar of Vishnu as Sri Krishna.

Of the above named avathars that going by the name 'Rama avathar' is perhaps most familiar to the people since the country has many temples dedicated to it. Ramaswami temple in KUMBAKONAM in the Tanjore district where he is represented as seated to be crowned, being one of them.

CHAPTER XXI.

VINAYAKA CHATURTI.

The Hindu ceremony going by the names Vinayaka Chaturti and Ganesh Chaturti is of perennial interest to the Hindus all over India. It is a Vratha observed on the fourth day in the bright fortnight of the month *Badrapadha* called in Tamil *Avani* corresponding to the English month August-September, to obtain knowledge of things and success in all undertakings. There is not a Hindu ceremony but commences with a *puja* to this deity. The reason for this is obvious. Grit and strength of will are necessary for success in all undertakings. Intelligence also must play its part well. The trunk of this elephant-headed deity symbolises grit and strength of will and the head of the elephant symbolises wisdom, so by worshipping Vinayaka, one makes up his mind to use grit and strength of will, wisely, in the undertaking he is going to set his hands to.

The myth relating to the origin of this deity with an elephant's head and a protruding paunch is in brief as follows :—

Once upon a time, Lord Siva, one of the Hindu Trinity, was out hunting with his 'Ganas' or attendants. His consort Parvathi was left alone. She desired to take a bath, but there were no attendants to guard the entrance of the bath-room while she was in it. By her occult powers she created a guard and placed him at the entrance to the bath-room with strict orders not to let any one inside.

Siva returned home from hunting shortly after and wanted to pass into the bath-room where his consort Parvathi was. He was prevented from doing so by the guard placed at the gates by Parvathi. Wild with rage at the audacity of the fellow, who dared to prevent him from entering a compartment in his very house, Siva drew out his sword and cut off his head. An altercation ensued shortly afterwards between Siva and Parvathi over this affair and Siva in the end promised to restore life to the guard whom he had killed in a fit of anger. He sent one of his men to bring him

the head of the first animal he saw in the forest with its head facing north,[1] to be placed over the trunk of the guard slain by him since he could not find the original head.

The attendant returned with an elephant's head[2] which Siva placed over the trunk, restored the guard to life, and made him the 'Pathi' or chief of his Ganas to compensate him for the wrong inflicted on him by his hasty act. From this incident, he is said to have derived the name Ganadhipathi which means the chief of the attendants.

Fig. 32—*Vinayaka* God.

The Goddess Parvathi is said to have created this guard (Fig. 32) on the fourth day in the bright fortnight of the month Bhadrapada in a particular year. So this day has been chosen for his worship every year as specially auspicious and important.

This deity is said to have assumed different forms for a variety of purposes. On one occasion, he is said to have assumed the form of a mad elephant and pursued the virgin Valli whom his brother Subramanya loved madly, to make her seek his protection in terror which resulted in her deep love to her protector and eventual marriage to him.

On another occasion, he is said to have assumed the form of a crow to upset a pot of holy water kept by the sage Agastya in his hermitage on the Sahya[3] mountain in Coorg. The holy river Cauvery is said to have taken her rise from this spot.

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1. In consequence thereof arose the belief that it is not right to sleep with one's head placed northward. See footnote 2 on page 165 of S. I. G. G. It is interesting to note that a comparative study of religion reveals the fact that the characteristics of Vinayaka are attributed to *Janus* of the Latins.

2. "The elephant's head and also the rat are probably emblems of the prudence, sagacity and forethought which the Hindus attribute to this divinity." Du Bois, *op. cit*, p. 638, f. 1 on page 31 of H. F.

3. Western Ghauts.

On one occasion, when a fit for mischief was on him, he is said to have assumed the form of a youth to ply his jokes and tricks in the abode of certain sages. Though he was caught and chained to a pillar there for his mischief in the beginning, the sages came to know who he really was subsequently, and made him gifts of a kind of cake called '*Modhakam*'.[1] From that time forward people began the practice of preparing this special kind of cake for offering to Vinayaka and distribute the same among youths after offering them to him.

The use of Hariali[2] grass for performing worship to their God is also said to be of special importance.

Once there is said to have lived an asura by name Gajamuka. He was very powerful and compelled Indra and the other devas to knock on their foreheads with their knuckles and to sit and stand alternately to show that they were submissive to him. Vinayaka is said to have destroyed this asura and consequently the devas did before him what they were compelled to do by the asura to show humility. The people copied this practice from the devas and it has now become the custom with the Hindus of all classes, when worshipping Vinayaka.

Vinayaka is said to ride on a *Mushaka* or a rat. Some say that this is symbolical of his relation to agriculture. The word '*Mooshakam*' is derived from a root the meaning of which is thief. A rat steals corn, and hence this deity is worshipped to protect the corn from this pest of field rats, since all the rat species of animals (rodents) are said to be under his control as their controlling deity. Further the deity's protuberant belly is said to be symbolical to represent the barn or the storehouse for grains and his ears the *surpa* or the winnowing basket.

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1. A ball-like cake having a pyramid on the top with sweet inside and covered over with boiled rice flour.

2. [The Brahmans] make use of it [the *durvva* grass] in all their ceremonies in the belief that it possesses the virtue of purifying everything. An annual feast instituted in honour of the sacred darbah grass is celebrated on the 8th day of the moon in the month of *Bhadra* (September) and is called the *darbha-astami*. By offering the grass as a sacrifice on that day immortality and blessedness for ten ancestors may be secured; and another result is that one's posterity increases and multiplies like the darbha grass itself, which is one of the most prolific members of the vegetable kingdom. Du Bois, *op. cit*, pp. 658-9, f. 1 on page 27 of H. F.

The tusk, the single one he possesses, they say, stands for the piece of iron in a plough which turns over the furrow, and the trunk itself for sheaths of corn. The name Surpakarna given to the deity lends support to this statement that he symbolises agricultural operations.

Ravana, king of the Rakshasas and of Ceylon, is said to have performed severe penance invoking the blessings of Siva and obtained from him a *lingam* or phallic symbol. The devas for reasons of their own desired that this lingam should never reach Lanka, and consequently made representations to Vinayaka.

Vinayaka thereupon in the guise of a Brahmin youth was standing on the way by which Ravana was coming. By his occult powers, he created in Ravana an immediate need to answer calls of nature, who thereupon desired the youth to hold the lingam for him for a few minutes with strict injunction not to place it on the ground on any account, since it was told to him by Siva that dire consequences would ensue if he happened to do so. The youth promised to hold it for him for a specified time and if Ravana did not return within it, he said he would place the lingam on the ground. Ravana consented, but could not return within the time limit specified by the youth who thereupon placed it on the ground. The lingam immediatly took root and became immovable having become fixed to the earth. The spot, which is in the Bombay Presidency, thenceforth came to be known as GOKARNAM, a very famous Hindu religious centre.

When Ravana returned and found out the trick played by the youth which spoiled his project of installing the lingam in his capital to ensure its prosperity, he grew very angry and gave him a severe knock on the forehead, upon which, Vinayaka showed him his true form. Ravana thereupon begged his pardon for the punishment inflicted on him unwittingly. To atone for the sin of this act, he knocked himself on his forehead with his knuckles which practice was forthwith copied by others to propitiate Vinayaka when performing his pooja.

There is a myth explaining the origin of the custom of breaking a number of cocoanuts before Vinayaka for attaining success in any undertaking.

On one occasion, Vinayaka had to enter the palace of the king of Benares to bless a bridal pair there. An asura by name 'Kuta' in the form

of a big rock on the way, prevented him from doing so. Vinayaka caused a number of cocoanuts to be brought there by the king and his people and had them broken on the rock, which act not only broke it into pieces but also drove the asura out of it. People thereupon copied this practice of breaking cocoanuts in front of Vinayaka to remove impediments in the pathway to the progress of any undertaking and it has since become one of the customs of the Hindus.

The great epic Mahabharata of the Hindus is said to have been written by this deity to dictation by the sage Vyasa, at a single stretch, on mount 'Meru[1].' One of his tusks was broken and made use of in place of a style and from this act, he is said to have won the name of '*Ekä-Dandan*' or deity with one tusk or tooth.

There are temples for Vinayaka everywhere in India and the Hindus worship him throughout the length and breadth of the land. But the shrines of special importance are those in the village of TIRUVALANJULI[2] near Kumbaconam, TIRUVIDAIMARUDUR in the Tanjore District, TIRUCHENGATTANGUDI[3] near Nannilam in the same district of Tanjore, and TRICHINOPOLY[4] (Fig. 33) where on the summit of the rock commanding the town is a special shrine to this God.

At Tiruvalanjuli, his form is represented in white stone. Also a metal image representing him with his two consorts Vani and Kamali, exists in the temple there.

In the temple at TIRUVIDAIMARUDUR the image is placed very near the sanctum of the God since he is said to have worshipped Siva in that place.

At TIRUCHENGATTANGUDI, and in the small shrine in the south main street at Chidambaram He is represented with ordinary human heads.

In the thousand-pillared Mandapa at CHIDAMBARAM, there is a carving of this deity going by the name *Navanitha Ganapathi* or butter-eating Ganapati on one of the pillars.

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1. The Olympus of India. Proverbially it is the finest of all things. It forms the central point of *Jambudvipa* and is said to be 84,000 *yojanas* high. Geographically it appears to be the high land of Tartary, immediately to the north of the Himalayas. The earth is described as a lotus floating on the great deep, having seven petâls called *dvipas* or continents around it, centre being the Mount Meru, on the top of which the Ganges pours from heaven, page 39 of M. A. D.
2. This is treated in Chapter XIV of S. I. S.
3. Do XXII do
4. Do XXIV do

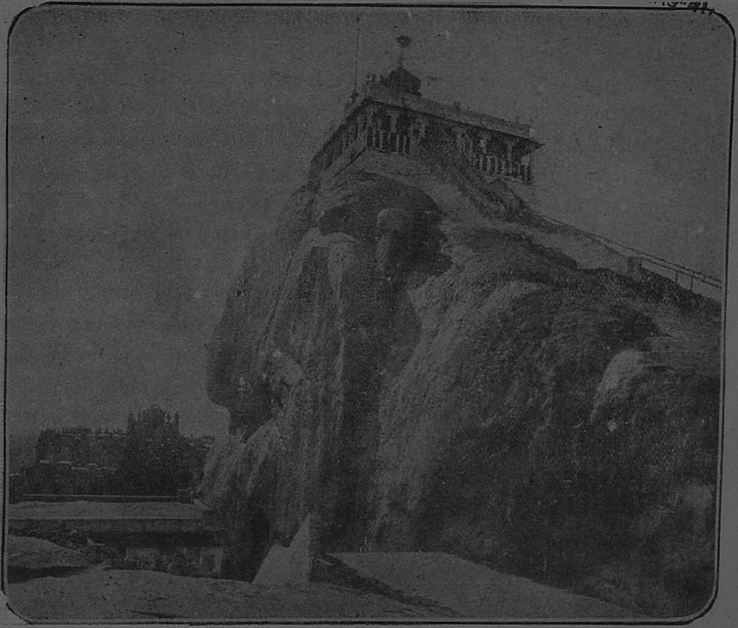

Fig. 33—TRICHINOPOLY Uchchipillaiyarcoil on the summit of the rock.

Heramba or Panchamuka (five-faced) Ganapathi forms of his are found in the Neelayathakshi Amman temple at NEGAPATAM and in the temple at JAMBUKESWARAM. In the former place, the image is a metallic one with a lion for its *Vahana* or vehicle, while in the latter it is of stone only without any Vahanam.

" Ravana's[1] mother was in the habit of worshipping a *lingam* for ensuring prosperity to her son. But Indra took it stealthily away out of spite and threw it into the sea. Ravana's mother thereupon refused to take even a

1. Pages 13 to 16, H. H. C.

morsel of food as her devotions were interrupted. Ravana promised to his devoted mother that he would bring the chief *atma-lingam* down from Kailas, and left for that mountain, the home of Siva. There he performed the most severe austerities. He had a melodious voice and sang so well that Siva was pleased at hearing his own praise in verse. The king of Ceylon chopped off his own head, made strings out of its skin, and with the harp prepared from those strings played to the satisfaction of the God of Kailas, who asked him to name his desires. Ravana thereupon asked for the *atma-lingam* and a wife as beautiful as Uma herself. Siva took out from his own heart the luminous *atma-lingam* as bright as a *crore* of Suns and handed it over to the demon, with the injunction that it should never be placed on the earth except where it had to be located for ever. Holding the gem in his hand, Ravana repeated his request for a beautiful wife—as charming as the goddess. Siva replied that his wife Uma had no equal in beauty all over the universe, and therefore he could only offer her as she was. Infatuated Ravana accepted her, blinded as he was by unholy lust for the Mother of the Creation. He placed her on his shoulder, and walked off—with the mother of the God of War, Skandh!! He was going to the south. When he was seen taking away the *atma-lingam* and the goddess, all the gods were alarmed. Her sons Ganesh, Skandh, and Virabhadra, as well as Nandikeshwar, were all astonished. They went to Siva and complained how he could part with their mother. Lord Siva smiled, and added that her great champion Vishnu, the Lord of Vaikunth, will release her. Bhavani, *alias* Uma, also began praying. She was and is herself a great power, but when ordered by her husband to go, she, as a dutiful wife, would not disobey. She, therefore, invoked the help of Vishnu. Lord Vishnu appeared before Ravana in the garb of an old Brahman and asked him where he got so charming a wife from? The demon replied that she was given to him by Sadasiva, the Lord of Kailas, and elated with the praise walked apace. 'Do look at her,' said the *pseudo* Brahman. Here the power of Vishnu made him forget himself and he took her down to gaze at her beauteous face. But alas!! The all-powerful goddess had turned herself into an old hag. Dirty, hideous, with frightful eye-brows, sunken cheeks, and toothless mouth she stood—a horrid, repulsive figure!! The Brahman laughed a cynical, satanic laugh and chided: 'Oh Ravana, what a beauty, for a wife of the Emperor of Ceylon!' Ravana felt humiliated and disgusted and left her on the spot. As soon as he turned away, Lord Vishnu, the husband of the Goddess of Wealth, established her there as Mother Bhadra-Kali, where

she still lives. The demon returned to Kailas and complained to Siva for giving him such a dirty hag. 'Yes, you speak the truth, my friend,' said he, 'she is a witch, a bad lot. She pervades the "innumerable universes," and she is invincible, you cannot rule her. She is uncontrollable.' God Vishnu then created a charming girl and assured Ravana that she would be born as Mandodari, the daughter of Giant Mayasura, that she would marry him and be a faithful wife. Ravana was satisfied at this assurance and proceeded with the journey still holding the *atma-lingam* in his hand. But as soon as he came to the same spot where he had left Uma, he met Ganesh in the garb of a cowherd. The great God of Success was requested by the other Gods to save the *atma-lingam*, and that was why he waylaid Ravana. At this moment, Ravana felt an uncontrollable call of Nature. So painful was it that he had to request Ganesh to hold the *lingam* in his hand for a few minutes. Ganesh said that he had charge of the cows and could not wait long. He could only stay for an hour and a half at the longest. 'Quite sufficient,' thought Ravana and went aside, but he could not return quickly. Half an hour passed and the cowherd (Ganesh) shouted, 'Beware Ravana, one *Ghanta*[1] has passed.' Another half an hour and another warning from Ganesh followed. But Ravana could not move. He made signs. He made violent gestures begging him to stay! It may be noted here that in India speech is prohibited during the relief of Nature. The third *Ghanta*, or half an hour, passed and Ganesh shouted, 'Off I go, sir. My cows have strayed. I cannot stay.' He then placed the *lingam* on the earth. At this very juncture Ravana felt free to move and ran after the cowherd (Ganesh), but he was gone. He disappeared. His cows also disappeared, but Ravana just reached one of them as she was sinking in the bowels of Mother-Earth.[2] He caught the beast by her ear, but the whole of the body was gone. This ear now seen petrified or fossilised is the relic that has given the spot its name Gokarna, or cow's ear, from *go*, *gau*, a cow, and *karna*, an ear. Taken with the name of the god Mahabaleshwar, or the all-powerful, it is called Gokarna-Mahábaleshwar, and the chief goddess there is called Bhadra-Kali. Ravana, the king of demons, the ten-headed and twenty-handed giant, tried his best to lift the *lingam* up but it was eternally fixed. He who could shake Mount Kailas with his powerful and plentiful arms, failed to uproot it, and that is why it is called Mahabaleshwar, the all-powerful god. He then turned once

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1. Roughly 24 minutes (about 2½ *ghantas* make an hour).

2. Throughout India the belief in the sanctity of earth is universal. The dying man is laid on the earth, and so is the mother at the time of parturition, page 58 of H. F.

more to the ear of the cow and tried to pull the beast out of the bowels of the earth, but he had not the power. The ear of the cow, the *lingam* of Siva, and Goddess Bhadra-Kali, are all there still, as Three in one. All the Gods worship them. Ravana's mother and brothers had to come there to worship. Once Vibhishana came to the temple unexpectedly, while a Brahman named Hemadpant was worshipping the God. He got frightened at the sight of the giant and hid himself in the *nirmal*,[1] or waste-bin containing the rejected leaves of the *bel* tree (*Aegle marmelos*) dear to Siva. Devout Vibhishana bowed to the *lingam*, took a pinch of the *bel* leaves, and placed it in his turban. Poor Hemadpant was carried in that pinch unnoticed by the giant. He went to Ceylon and there learnt the script known as *Modi* or modified *Nagari*. He again hid himself in the turban of the giant and as soon as he returned to the temple to pay his homage to Mahabaleshwar he escaped. He had thus been able to import a new script into the Maratha-speaking territory. Such is the tradition, but the fact remains that Shivaji introduced it in Government correspondence, through his Secretary or Chitnis Balaji Avaji. It is therefore known as *Chitnisi valan*. Gokarna-Mahabaleshwar, the seat of Bhadra-Kali, is reached from Bombay coasting steamers, and is visited by thousands of pilgrims who have faith in this *purana*. Many of them prefer it to all other seats of Kali, owing, as is related above, to the fact of the entire goddess being present there."

"[2] Once upon a time while elephant-headed Ganesh was riding his mouse and passing from Satyalok (Brahma's abode) through the Moon's abode (Chandralok) he fell down. The Moon who is very proud of his (the moon is a male in Indian mythology) good looks laughed at him. Ganesh cursed him and said: "Oh you sinner, Oh you antelope-shaped-nibus faced fellow!! Those who look at your face hereafter shall be falsely accused of offences against the law." This curse produced consternation all over the universe. The Moon hid himself in a lotus-flower. When he could not be seen, Gods, Rishis, Gandharvas—all were very sorry. Headed by Indra, they went to Brahma for advice. He said that God Ganesh was alone able to remove the baneful influence of his curse, and advised an appeal to him. Brihaspati, the Preceptor of the Gods, was then deputed to the Moon to direct how he should propitiate God Ganesh. The Moon did as he was instructed. Lord Ganesh was pleased, and appeared before him and in all

1. The flowers, etc., removed from idols after worshipping.
2. Pages 25 & 26 of H. H. C.

his glory attended by the eight Goddesses of Success (*ashtashiddhi*). The Moon begged to be pardoned. He was asked to name the favour he sought. He naturally begged that the terrible curse be wiped off. Ganesh refused. He said he would give him anything but that. The gods interceded. Ganesh revoked the curse. He said: "On the fourth day of the month of Bhadrapad (Ganesh day) those who will see you shall suffer from the curse in the course of the following year; there is no gain saying that. But sin will not touch those who will bow unto thee on every second day of each month." At the further importunities of the repentant Moon, Ganesh directed that "if by accident any one happened to see the Moon on the special Ganesh day he should fast on the fourth day (*chaturthi*) of the second half a month, worship me, and worship the Moon with his consort. Rohini as soon as they rise above the horizon. He should give to a priest a gold image of myself. He shall, if he does so, be protected from calamities."

"[1] The Goddess Durga expressed her desire to her lord, Siva, that she felt a craving for a babe to suckle. Siva smiled and remarked 'Why? You are the mother of the whole universe.' But she said that it was sad to miss the pleasure of actually nursing a babe and demanded that at least Kartick, his son, born in another way and kept aloof from her, should be brought to her. He consented and left Kailas to bring him. Durga was however so intent on having a babe that she made a doll and was looking at it. Vishnu the protector noticed it and thought it a good opportunity to please her. He therefore entered the doll and it came to life! When Siva returned with Kartick he found that his wife had already one child in her lap. She explained what had happened. They were both overjoyed and invited all the gods to have a look at the lovely babe. Among the guests was Sani, or Saturn, notorious for his evil eye. As soon as he threw a glance at the babe, its head dropped off! Alas! everybody was distressed and all the gods were alarmed! Durga began crying, and Siva could not bear it. At her request, he sent his *ganas*, or attendants, to find the lost head, but they failed! At last he directed that the head of any creature sleeping with its head towards the north should be chopped off and brought to him forthwith. An unfortunate cow-elephant was found in that inauspicious position. Its head was severed and taken to Kailas. Siva placed it on the mutilated body of the doll which came to life again! But the hideous, disproportionate figure of a man with the head of an elephant, distressed Durga. In order to

1. Pages 42 & 43 of H. H. C.

compensate for the disfigurement, Siva ordained that he should be appointed the head of the *ganas*, or attendants, and called Ganapati (*pati*-chief) or Ganesh (*ish*-chief or head) and that in all *pujas* he should be the first deity to be invoked. He further added that he who invokes Ganesh at the beginning of an undertaking shall have his efforts crowned with success, and bestowed the title of Siddhitata, 'Success Giver,' on the boy. Ganesh thus became the departmental deity of success."

CHAPTER XXII.

NAVA-RATRI.

Navaratri or the holy nine nights is a period of festivity observed by the Hindus for nine days or rather nights after sunset in temples in the month of *Purattasi* corresponding to the English month September-October, commencing on the first day in the bright fortnight of the month every year. The object or aim with which it is observed is said to be to propitiate the Goddess symbolising every possible kind of energy in the universe, with a view to obtain perpetual happiness and prosperity.

Many of the greatest philosophers of the world are of opinion that nature builds everything by 'forms and numbers.' Geometry is the science of form and Arithmetic is the science of numbers. The former may be said to be specially related to Architecture while the latter makes order and limitation possible in the universe.

It is a very interesting fact to note that Devi-worship, if at all it is to be effective, should be by means of *yantras* or geometrical figures engraved on metal plates having within the figures or numerical digits, or alphabets of words, arranged in a particular order.

Chakras[1] and Yanthras are two kinds of engravings on metal plates, the former consisting of angles and petal-like parts, and the latter of triangles alone, either single or in combination or interlacing in different ways. There is also another '*Pithas*' said to be used in invoking the manifestation of the powers of the deity. These 'Pithas' are nothing but the clear-cut metal images of the deity, while meditating upon her.

The reason why 'nine' days are chosen as the duration for the observance of this festival and neither more nor less is interesting and deserves examination.

The digit or numeral nine contains within it all the other numbers of one digit but is contained in none of them. So Devi or Goddess contains within her the whole universe and no finite form or form with limitation can

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1. For detailed information on the subject, see page 185, S. I. G. G.

contain her who is without any limitation. This fact is emphasised by the duration nine days fixed for the observance of this festival.

The chief forms in which this Goddess of the universe is worshipped are Kali or Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati.

Kali or Durga is the wife of Siva representing the destructive aspect of the intelligence presiding over the universe, Lakshmi is the consort of Vishnu, the preservative aspect, while Saraswati, the Goddess of learning, is linked to Brahma, the creative aspect. Hence the three forces in the universe—the creative, the preservative and the destructive, are represented by these three forms referred to above.

It is believed by the Hindus that there are two aspects in the universe, namely, the positive aspect and the negative aspect. The positive aspect in creation, preservation and destruction is represented by the Hindu Trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, while the negative aspect in these is represented and personified by the three goddesses referred to above, *viz.*, Saraswati, Lakshmi and Durga.

The personified Sakti in the destructive aspect of the universe goes by different names. In her mild aspect, she is worshipped as Uma or Parvathi, consort of Siva. In her fearful aspect she is worshipped as Durga, Kali, Mahishasuramardhani (Fig. 34) and so on. She derived the last name from

Fig. 34—*Mahishasuramardhani* (Goddess slaying a demon).

her having destroyed an asura named Mahishasura or asura in the guise of a he-buffalo. From this incident arose the custom of buffalo sacrifice to Durga by the lower caste Hindus.

People believe that the worship of the Goddess Durga has been performed from time out of mind.

Her image, as generally set up for worship by the people, is one of a ten-handed Goddess. In one of her hands she is holding a spear with which she is piercing the giant-Mahishasura. With one of the left, she is holding aloft the head of a giant. Her other hands hold different instruments of war.

A lion is leaning against her right leg and the asura with the buffalo head is leaning against her left leg.

The majestic deportment of the goddess with her ten arms and warlike attitude in which she is represented, combined with her sanguinary character, has made her the terror of all other Gods. Her mighty exploits have given her an importance in the eyes of all the people not vouchsafed to any other deity.

Even the Hindu Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are—said to have done their best to propitiate her. Even Rama, son of Dasaratha and Prince of Ayodhya, is said tc have invoked her aid in his contest with the ten-headed giant Ravana, king of Lanka, by worshipping her, in the month of October. From this particular circumstance, this puja came to be performed in the month of October, and not in any other month during the year.

As a refined taste is being cultivated, people have manifested a growing desire to decorate the image of the goddess going by the combined name of Durga-Lakshmi-Saraswati, with splendid tinsel and gewgaws to heighten the magnificence of the spectacle in popular estimation.

Families in affluent circumstances, rack their brains to find out new and more gaudy embellishments for their images to outvie those of their neighbours in the magnificence of the decoration and to carry off the laurel crown of bubble reputation.

Certain classes of men drawn chiefly from the lower strata of society subsist solely from the income derived from trade in these tinsels, gewgaws and toys made of clay or saw-dust and beautifully and artistically coated over with colours.

During the nine days of this Navaratri festival, toys in large numbers tastefully decorated and arranged on galleries, are exhibited in almost all

houses with the belief that the goddess is present on those toys and enjoys the worship offered to her. It is a pleasant sight to see young girls in their gaudy gala dresses and looking very smart and active going from house to house in the village in the evenings after sun-set, to invite the maidens and girls of that village to be present in their houses during the puja performance and to partake of the daily offerings to the Goddess.

It is said in Hindu religious scriptures that heaven and every conceivable happiness are the results of sacrifices. Not understanding the principle implied in the word 'sacrifice' people took it for granted that animals were created for sacrifices. They of by-gone days thought that the offerings of sacrifices to certain blood-thirsty and carnivorous deities and feasting on the flesh of the slaughtered animals really paved the way to salvation and celestial bliss. Hence sacrifices are supposed by some even to-day to result in the remission of the sacrificer's sin and in the blessings of the deity sacrificed to.

Thousands and thousands of oxen and sheep were and are slain every year before the altar of certain deities like the Durga-Devata. In fact it is said that large heaps of the flesh of the slaughtered animals had to be thrown away on many occasions for lack of men to eat them. In this connection, it may be added that a successful cutting off, of the head of the animal at one stroke meant good luck for the sacrificer. Such indeed is said to be the belief of a large number of Hindus belonging to the lower strata of the society, who offer animal sacrifices to the deities.

Another form in which this kind of manifested Sakti is worshipped goes by the name 'Kali.' She is generally represented as standing on the breast of her lord Siva with protruding tongue, having four arms one holding a scimitar, another the head of a giant she had slain in fight, the third spread out as if bestowing blessings on her devotees, and the fourth as if she were welcoming the blessed. She is also represented as wearing a necklace of skulls and a girdle formed of the hands of the giants she had slain, round her waist. These horrid sights combined with her dark figure and locks of hair hanging down to her heels manifest the terrific character of the goddess.

Why she is represented as standing on the breast of her husband Siva is explained in the following incident.

On one occasion, she had gained a victory over a formidable giant. Elated and intoxicated with joy, she is said to have commenced a frantic dance in the battle-field forgetting everything. The earth trembled, the gods were terrified and there was no peace on earth. No one dared to approach her in her then attitude. At last Siva as her husband was persuaded by the devas to go to her and pacify her. When he attempted to do so, she would not in her frenzy recognise him and so he had to throw himself among the corpses of the slain to remain there till recognised by her.

As she continued to dance, she inadvertently stepped on the breast of her husband, who taking the opportunity drew her attention to him by stirring and showing signs of life.

When the fit of frenzy had left her, she came to herself and stood aghast at what she had done.

She felt shocked and ashamed at the unhappy accident, and as a result of that feeling, bit her tongue having protruded it. From this incident she came to be worshipped by her followers, with Siva under her foot and a protruding tongue.

Though the gross materialisation of the basic principle shocks one, the allegory of the observance is a significant one.

Siva, as has already been shown, represents the destructive aspect and the manifestation of this aspect by him is 'Sakti.' The destruction of forms is always a ghastly sight. Hence has arisen the custom of the observance of this ghastly form of propitiating the goddess forgetting the basic principle conveyed by it, and basely abusing it by the materialistic tendency into which humanity was gradually plunging.

The higher class people of the Hindu society generally worship the preservative and the creative Saktis only and they go by the names Lakshmi and Saraswati. So the deities worshipped in their houses during the Navaratri days are Lakshmi and Saraswati. If at all the destructive Sakti is worshipped it is in her milder form known by the names 'Gauri', Uma and Parvati.

The first day of this Navaratri festival, if it is ruled over by the asterism 'Hasta' (*corvi*), is said to be specially suited for the Devi worship to

invoke blessings on the whole world. The Vratha in which the Goddess Gauri represented as seated on a white elephant and worshipped goes by the name 'Gaja-Gauri Vratha.' This Vratha observed at the hour when the Sun enters the asterism Hasta is believed to bring worldly prosperity for the observer.

An image of Gauri is made and worshipped on the first Tuesday in the month of Sravana. After the puja or worship is over, the image is made a gift of, to a deserving Brahmin with money, pan-supari, flowers, fruits, etc., by women to insure their immunity from widowhood and to give them good children. The observance of the Vratha in this manner is given the name of 'Mangala-Gauri-Vratha.'

A noteworthy feature in the observance of the Navaratri Vratha is that virgins, ranging from the age of two to ten, are specially noticed with gifts of saffron, vermilion flowers, sandal paste, fruits, etc., after the Gauri puja. The reason for this is obvious. Nine Saktis or forces of Devi are recognised. These are personified and given the names of (1) Kumari, (2) Trimurti, (3) Kalyani, (4) Rohini, (5) Kalika, (6) Chandika, (7) Sambavi, (8) Durga and (9) Subhadra.

Kumari represents the playful activities in babes making and unmaking things. Devi's activity directed to the creation of Brahma and the devas is akin to this play of children though in a higher level. Hence babes are noticed on the Navaratri days.

The Sakti 'Trimurti' is said to bestow good children; 'Kalyani' education and royal friendship; 'Rohini' freedom from sins; 'Chandika' wealth; 'Sambavi' success in undertakings; 'Durga' removal of impediments; and 'Subhadra' desired-for objects. All these possibilities are in virgins and consequently they are chosen to bestow the notice on them. It is said that in their selection, care must be taken to exclude the deformed, the slovenly, the bad-smelling, the sickly and the blind. Beautiful virgins, belonging to good families, should be chosen since they are to be considered as representations of Sakti who is perfect in everything.

The Navaratri festival is also known as the Dasara festival. On the ninth and the last day of this period, the goddess Saraswati is worshipped. The worship goes by the name Saraswathi Puja. It is interesting to note

that this puja is performed in honour of the element *Vayu* (air). The goddess is installed in a pot called '*gadam*'.

In ancient days when cadjan leaf manuscripts were in vogue, but not printed books, the manuscripts were neatly arranged on a plank and the worship was offered to Saraswati, by worshipping those manuscripts. Nowadays, printed books, pens and pencils take the place of the cadjan leaves, manuscripts and stiles.

If the Saraswati puja day happens to be a Tuesday or the day on which the moon is in the asterism 'Hasta' the occasion is said to be specially auspicious for her puja.

On the day during the festive period when the asterism 'moolam' is in the ascendency, Saraswati is installed on the books arranged for her worship; oblations and sacrifices are offered on the occasion of the next asterism 'Pooradam'; and a happy send off is given her on the ensuing day when the asterism Tiruvonam (*Aquitæ*) holds sway.

The ceremony of installation goes by the name '*Avahanam,*' and that for sending her off is known as '*Visarjunam.*' The instilling of life in the image and the send off given after the puja ceremony is over, are considered most religious and sacred, since the former action is akin to charging a 'dynamo' with the mental force or electricity while the latter may be compared to the act of storing it away to be brought out for use on the next occasion when needed. There are potent incantations recited on both these occasions.

It is no doubt true that the Hindus worship idols and images. But when the basic principles on which the 'Avahanam' and 'Visarjanam' referred to above are based, are taken into consideration, it will be seen that the images are intended to serve the purpose of a means to concentrate the mind on the abstract idea of a deity without material form, and that they are not in themselves ends.

The centre of force created persists and may be attached to a fresh form or image if the original one is defaced or mutilated. But the newly formed image should be similar to the one replaced having proportions of the various parts of it in accordance with the dictates of *Silpa-Sastra* or the

science of Architecture, relating to the formation of images. The mutilated and cast off image should be thrown into deep water to avoid creation by people of mutilated thought forms by looking at it.

The day next to the 'Mahanavami' day in which puja to the Goddess Saraswati is performed, goes by the name Vijaya-Dasami. The word *Vijaya* is the name given to the twilight hour between sunset and night-fall. This hour is said to be highly favourable for certain occult developments. The nature of this twilight has eluded the grasp of even very great men. Anyhow the word 'Vijaya' may be taken to mean 'auspicious' and 'Vijayadasami' day may well be called 'A day of auspicious beginning.'

Tourists select this occasion for embarking on their journeys, and children begin their alphabets for the first time on this occasion only.

If the Vijaya-Dasami day happens to be presided over by the asterism 'Tiruvonam' the occasion is said to be highly meritorious and auspicious.

A tree called the 'Vanni' (*Prosopis Spicigera*) is worshipped on this occasion for the reason that it once had given relief to Parvathi by its shade when she was much fatigued. Sri Rama, hero of Ramayana, is said to have circumambulated this tree in his rambles in search after Sita to get her back. The Pandavas are said to have concealed their arms in a 'Vanni' tree when they had to lead their lives *incognito*.

The importance of the Vijaya-Dasami day as an auspicious one for the beginning of a new venture, is emphasised by the following myth :—

Lord Siva, on one occasion, had gone into a state of yoga trance going by the name 'Nirvikalpa-Samadhi.' By this act of his, he had controlled the play of forces in the senses. As his senses remained controlled, there was no play of such forces in the world and consequently there was no activity among men and certain classes of devas. The higher devas grew anxious and desired 'Manmata,' the God of all desires, to disturb Siva's Samadhi and bring him to the lower level of consciousness where the 'Indriyas' or organs of sensations and feelings have full play. When he attempted to do so, Siva opened his third eye of destruction and looked at 'Manmatha'. This act of Siva consumed Manmatha to ashes.

Siva's first born 'Ganesa' in a playful mood formed out of the ashes of Manmatha's body a mould which was subsequently filled with life by Siva, and it then became a cruel demon named 'Bhandasura.'

This demon performed severe penance and obtained from Siva the boon that none but the Devi could destroy him. When it became imperative that he was to be destroyed in the interest of the universe, the Devi assumed different forms during the nine nights of 'Nava-ratri' (since nights are asura's periods of activity while days are of devas') to destroy him but without success. On the tenth day namely Vijaya-Dasami day, she prayed to that aspect in her Lord 'Siva' going by the name 'Kameswara,' and obtained from him the power to vanquish the demon and eventually to kill him. It is also said that by the union of this aspect of Siva, Devi begot her second born Subramanyam, the mighty teacher of Gods and men.

As Rama began his march to rescue Sita from the hands of Ravana, on this auspicious day, Hindu Rajas subsequently came to consider the day as one generally auspicious for starting on any expedition.

Nowadays, as there are no Rajas to conduct the expedition against, in some States, grand Dasara-processions are arranged to keep alive the past memory and to impress on the people the importance of the occasion.

The other myths emphasising the importance of the observance of this Navaratri Vratha are given below :—

In the Golden age of bygone time, a king named Suketu lost his kingdom by the machinations of his relatives and had to take refuge in the forest in company with his wife. Covered over with wounds, the king was being tended and consoled by his wife under a shady tree. The sage Angirasa chanced to come there, and taking pity on the unfortunate couple, advised the queen in exile to observe the Navaratri Vratha, by doing which, her husband was restored to health and reinstated in his kingdom. She is also said to have shaken off her sterility and given birth to a good child.

A pauper merchant named Suchela, in the kingdom of Kosala with a very large family to support, is said to have obtained plenty of wealth as a result of the observance of this *Vratha*.

Of the places specially sacred for the worship of Devi, the following are the most prominent: CONJEEVARAM[1] is said to be the place where Devi had

1. This is dealt with in Chapter II of S. I. S.

once performed rigid penance. MADURA[1] is the place where she is said to have ruled with sceptre in her hand.

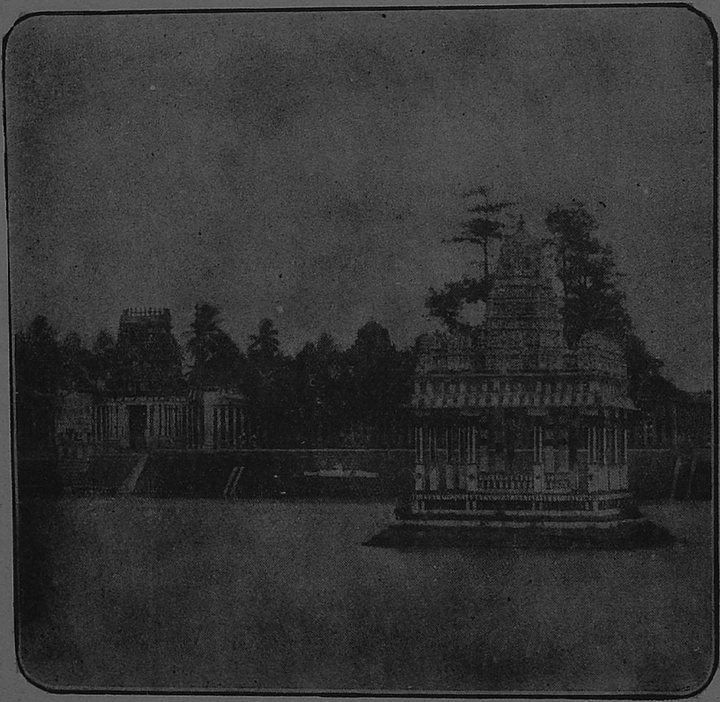

Fig. 35—MYLAPORE, Sri Kapaliswarer temple with the tank in front.

She is said to have danced with her Lord Siva at a place called TIRUVALANGADU near Madras, and acted the part of a midwife and nurse to a forlorn woman devotee of hers at TIRUKKALAVUR near Papanasam in the Tanjore district.

1. This is dealt with in Chapter XXIX of S. I. S.

At MAYAVERAM[1] in the Tanjore district and at MYLAPORE[2] (Fig. 35) in the city of Madras she is said to have worshipped Siva having assumed the form of a *mayura*, called also in Tamil Mayil, corresponding to the English word pea-hen, giving the places their respective names.

TIRUCHENGODE[3] near Sankaridrug is famous as the place where she forms the left half of Iswara's body.

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1. This is dealt with in Chapter X of S. I. S.
2. Do I do
3. Do XXXIII of S. I. S.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SKANDA SASHTI.

The festival going by the name of Skanda Sashti is observed on the sixth day of the bright fortnight in the month of *Arpisi* corresponding to the English month October-November. The observance is to propitiate Lord Subramanyam, the second son of Siva, in his aspect of Kameswara for having overcome and destroyed the asura called 'Surapadma' and his followers. The mythical incident relating to this is in brief as follows:—

Once the asuras had obtained from Lord Siva innumerable boons. Puffed with pride at their achievements they had become arrogant, and one among them by name 'Takshan' had even gone to the extent of wantonly insulting Siva by withholding his portion of the sacrifical offering (*Yagyabhaga*) on a particular occasion.

In former times, there were different grades of beings going by different names such as Rishis, Deva-Rishis, Brahma-Rishis, Bagavan, Devas and Prajapathis. The Taksha referred to above belonged to the order of Prajapathis and hence he was also styled Taksha-Prajapati.

This Taksha-Prajapati had a daughter named Sati, and Siva desired very much to marry her. The feeling of love was reciprocated and Siva and Sati were married. Shortly after, Taksha performed a sacrifice, but did not invite his son-in-law for it, nor did he offer him the portion of the sacrificial offering which was his due as to one of the Trinity he belonged to. Siva of course resented the insult and the sacrifice was spoiled.

By the wanton insult offered to Siva by Taksha-Prajapati he had become a great sinner. Sati, filled with grief at the feud between her father and her husband, destroyed herself, but was born again as Parvathi and married Siva again.

At this time an asura by name Taraka was harassing the devas. Unable to withstand his prowess the army of the devas broke and fled, and Indra, the celestial king, approached Brahma for advice. He directed him to use

Manmatha's powers to rouse the love for Parvathi, dormant in Siva bent on yoga practice, and doing which he succeeded in making Siva beget his second son Subramanyam, who in course of time became the commander-in-chief of the deva army and destroyed the asura Taraka along with his followers.

The mythical incident of the birth of Lord Subramanyam with six faces, a dozen arms and two feet, is highly allegorical, interesting and instructive, full of spiritual and philosophical significance worthy to be deeply pondered over to get at the real significance of the myth. The myth itself in brief is as follows :—

While Siva was seated with Parvathi, his consort, on his lap, the devas approached him and made representations that the asura Surapadma with his hosts of followers was harassing the devas and injuring the world. Roused to anger by these words of the devas complaining about the wicked actions of Surapadma, he emitted from his third eye in the forehead six sparks of fire of surpassing brilliance and splendour.

Unable to bear the pulsating vibrations and radiance emanating from these sparks of mighty potency, the devas again prayed to Siva to reduce the force emanating from them and make it bearable, for them. He thereupon directed Vayu, the God of wind, and Agni, the God of fire, to help the devas by using their powers to moderate the energy of the sparks.

By the influence of Agni and Vayu the sparks having been reduced to smiling and shining streaks of splendour, were wafted away to the fountain source of the holy river Ganges on the mountain tops of the sacred Himalayan ranges.

After contact with the holy waters of the Ganges, these gem-like sparks of fire gathered together in a bush of reeds that was near, and assumed the form of a glorious being of light and colour of dazzling brilliancy and splendour with six faces and twelve hands. Thus is described the origin of the lord Subramanyam of the Hindus (Fig. 36).

Filled with wonder and admiration the devas and others fell to praising this second-born lord of Iswara destined to become not only the saviour of the world but also the teacher of gods and men in this solar system.

It is interesting to note that Vishnu, the preserver of the universe, is said to have directed the Krithika dames (*Pleiades*) to nurse this marvellous child and from this incident, he is said to have derived the name Kartikeya.

Fig. 36—*Subrahmanya.*

On one occasion, Brahma, the lord of creation, is said to have been challenged by Subramanyam to expound the sacred word *Pranava*[1] to his satisfaction, and when he failed to do so was imprisoned by our Lord in a cave. On Siva's interference Brahma was released, and Subramanyam is said to have thoroughly grasped the expoundings of Pranava given to Parvathi by Siva, even when he was an infant on the lap of Parvathi. It is therefore no wonder that he is recognised by all as the lord of wisdom, which fact is represented symbolically by associating him with serpent which stands for space as well as wisdom according to circumstances.

A peculiar form of propitiating this deity is that of carrying a *Kavadi*[2] to any one of his temples, by a devotee from his village or residence. This custom is rather unique and deserves special attention and thought to reveal the mystery remaining behind the custom. At any rate, there is an allegorical myth connected with the origin of the custom.

In Hindu scriptures, there is mention made of a dwarf sage Agastya[3] who is said to have drunk the oceans dry on a particular occasion!! This Agastya is said to have been given two hillocks on mount Kailas, the abode

1. From Sanskrit *pranu* = to utter. The Mystical syllable *om*.

2. From Tamil *Kavu* = to carry on the shoulder and *tadi* = pole. Pole for carrying burdens, resting on the shoulder. This is here applied to the religious performance of a vow and in this case to the ends of the pole, pots filled with milk or sugar, are attached according to the vow taken. For further particulars see pages 158 and 159 of S. I. S.

3. The life of this sage and his figure appear on page 108 of S. I. S.

of Siva in the north, with the permission to take them south to be located somewhere there and worshipped as Siva and Sakti, spirit and matter. As the hillocks could not be forthwith removed, the sage returned to his abode going by the name Podiamalai leaving the hillocks in a forest called Burchavanam. There he was met by an asura named Idumban, the sole survivor of the asura class, destroyed by the prowess of Subramanyam, and who was in fact the preceptor of the asuras when they were in affluent circumstances. He begged the Sage Agastya to accept him as his disciple and to initiate him in the mystery of the divine wisdom. Complying with his request, the sage directed him to go and bring the two hillocks left in the Burchavanam in the north to be located in the south. He also invested him with certain powers by which he was able to command the rod of Brahma and the services of the eight serpents—Vasuki, Ananthan, Takshan, Sangapalan, Gulikan, Padman, Mahapadman and Karkotakan, to remove the hillocks and carry them on his shoulders.

Using the huge and mighty serpents as ropes, he tied the two hillocks to the two ends of the rod of Brahma and was proceeding south carrying them, all balancing them on his shoulders. When he came to the place called Palni, Idumban felt tired and having placed the burden down, began to take some rest. Having recovered from the fatigues of the journey he tried to lift the burden from the ground to proceed on the journey, but to his surprise and dismay, he found one of the hillocks rooted to the earth, and do what he might he was not able to lift it!! Mounting to the top of one of them, he espied there Subramanyam in the guise of a youth in underwear with a stick in his hand.

An altercation ensued between our lord and Idumban which resulted in the latter's falling down on the ground senseless. Idumban's wife subsequently prayed to Subramanyam to spare her husband, pardon him and bless him, who taking pity on the devoted wife of Idumban, restored him to consciousness and took him into his favour by making him his (*Dvarapalaka*) gate-keeper.

From the incident referred to above, has originated the custom of Kavadi-bearing of the Hindus to propitiate Subramanyam.

There are many temples dedicated to Subramanyam in southern India. The specially important places for the worship of Subramanyam are

TIRUCHENDUR[1] as the place were he was first worshipped for having destroyed the asura Surapadma, TIRUPPARANKUNRAM[2] near Madura where he is said to have married a damsel by name Devasenai, PALNI[3] near Dindigal where he appeared to Idumban in the guise of a youth, and SWAMIMALAI[4] near Kumbakonam where he is said to have initiated Iswara himself in the mysteries of Pranava.

At VAITHISWARANKOIL,[5] he is worshipped as a lovely youth who is said to have obtained his *Valayutham* (invincible lance) from the Goddess Sakti, and at TRICHENGODE he is worshipped in the form of a serpent.

TIRUTANI near Madras is also important as the place where he is said to have married Valli, and a place called KAMBANKOLLAI (not yet identified!) is made mention of, where he made Vinayaka threaten his lady-love Valli in the guise of an elephant to make her voluntarily fall into his arms and eventually wed him.

1. This is dealt with in Chapter XXXII of S. I. S.
2. Do page 177 of do
3. Do Chapter XXVIII of do
4. Do page 74 of do
5. Do Chapter VIII of do

CHAPTER XXIV.

DEEPAVALI PANDIGAI.

Deepavali Pandigai goes by another name Naraka-Chaturdasi-Snanam, perhaps from a bath taken before daybreak on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight in the month of Arpisi, corresponding to the English month September-October. An asura named Narakasura is said to have been destroyed by Sri-Krishna on this day and the festival is intended to commemorate the incident.

The word 'Deepavali' means a row of lamps and it originated perhaps from the custom of illuminating villages on this festive occasion. In course of time this was replaced either wholly or partly by fire-works. Children and even adults fire crackers during the short hours before daybreak and enjoy it immensely. New cloths, and fire-work display are considered signs of auspiciousness and hence people wear new cloths after the auspicious bath and enjoy the occasion as set forth above.

The new-moon day which immediately follows the Deepavali day goes by the name of Deepavali Amavasya day. The occasion is considered to be specially favourable to propitiate the manes (*Pitris*) of the departed and hence libations of water with sesamum or gingelly seed are offered to them with the necessary *mantrams* or chantings. This offering performed by the fatherless on all new-moon days goes by the name *Pitri-Tarpanam* which means an 'action to satisfy the manes of the forefathers.' The Hindus are enjoined to offer oblations of water everyday to satisfy the Devas, the Rishis (sages) and the Pitris (manes of the departed), and the new-moon days are special occasions for the offerings to the manes of the departed. Certain new-moon days are considered more suitable and more favourable for the offerings than other new-moon days, and this new-moon day is considered one of such occasions. So people perform the *Tarpanam* with special care and attention on this day.

There is a belief among the Hindus that there is a great reservoir of spiritual force in the universe in the custody of the Adhikarika Purushas or

highly evolved souls who are responsible for the spiritual progress of human beings. These liberate portions of this force from the reservoir and pour them among the masses when they gather in particular places on particular occasions. Further when the magnetic conditions are favourable, certain substances absorb the forces liberated and retain the property for a limited period. Gingelly[1] seed (*Sesamum Indicum*) is a favourite seed of the planet Saturn or Sani. Perhaps on the occasion of the Deepavali morning, owing to the peculiar position of the several planets, this Saturn is capable of charging the essence of his favourite seed, the gingelly, with special properties. So anointing the head with this oil on the occasion is considered to bestow on men and women, health, wealth and prosperity in addition to spiritual progress Further, water everywhere is believed to be saturated with holy magnetism on this occasion. Hence people think that water used for bathing in the early hours of the morning before sunrise is equal in merit to that of the Ganges which is always surcharged with the properties of very valuable herbs and the magnetism of the great sages believed to live near the source of the sacred river and bathe in her sacred waters everyday before sunrise. When people meet one another after the holy bath, they ask one another whether they had the 'Ganga Snanam' or the bath in the waters of the Ganges. A special noteworthy feature on this occasion is that gifts of fruits, pan-supari, sandal paste, and even money are freely made to people going to visit friends, relations and even utter strangers. This custom is observed by people when bathing in the waters of the sacred rivers, without which, a bath is considered to be not at all efficacious. Hence we find that the comparison of ordinary water with that of the Ganges is sustained.

The myth deriving the epithet 'Naraka Chaturdasi' is interesting.

Once there was an asuraking named Narakasura, ruling over the universe residing at a part of the present Bengal Presidency. Though a deep devotee of Vishnu, his rule was considered undesirable and consequently Sri Krishna was approached for by the public. The lord proceeded to the place and overcame him on this day which, as the day of joy, was commemorated. King Bali[1], the weighty king of the asuras, began to usurp the kingdom of India. On being appealed to by Indra, god Vishnu, one of the Hindu

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1. Sanskrit Tila ; *til*=to anoint.

Trinity in the guise of a Brahmin dwarf, begged of the asura three feet of ground from his vast empire. When that was granted, Vishnu to measure the portion gifted out to him, assumed a huge form going by the name 'Trivikrama Avatar' and measured the earth and the heavens as two feet, and for the third, placed his foot on the asura's [1] head and pushed him down into the nether-world. As he was a deep devotee and a being of great merit, Vishnu had to bless him with certain boons. To commemorate the advent of Vishnu as the dwarf (*Vamana*) Avatara and giant (Trivikrama) Avatara (incarnation), this occasion came to be considered as auspicious. Because of the boons conferred on the asura, by Vishnu, the merits resulting from actions such as charity to the undeserving, sacrifices of clarified butter not poured in flames *Sraddhas* (ceremonies) performed to satisfy the manes of the departed without observing the prescribed rites, and 'yagnyas' or sacrifices performed unaccompanied by the necessary gifts, go to king Bali.[2]

As king Bali is supposed to rule over the nether-world, people do not like the idea of the merits of their action not properly performed going over to him and strengthening his power. So they are *very* careful to observe the rites and ceremonies paying due attention to the formalities to be gone through in each case.

There is a strong belief current among the Hindus, that a beginning made on the auspicious Deepavali day will be conducive to prosperity and success. Hence the Vaisyas or the Hindu trading castes of northern and western India open fresh accounts every year on this day, after having performed pooja to the Goddess Lakshmi and distributed presents and gifts to those assembled on invitation. They keep awake the whole night trying one another's luck in games at dice. Even visitors are free to met with, or against one or other of the persons engaged in the game with a view to try

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1. See figure 43 on page 72 of "S. I. S."

2. The Mahabharata gives the following legend about king Bali. It came to pass that Bali, the mighty Raja of the Asuras, conquered Indra and the gods, and the gods came to the hermitage of Visvamitra and prayed to Vishnu for succour; and Vishnu was re-born on earth in the form of a Dwarf (*Vamana avatara*), and he assumed the dress of a mendicant and went to the abode of Bali and asked the latter to give him as much earth as he could step over in three steps; and Bali granted his request. Then Vishnu took upon himself a mighty form and took three steps; and the first step covered the earth; the second covered the heavens; and the third was placed on the head of Bali. And Vishnu sent Bali and all his legions to the realms below the earth and once more restored the universe to the rule of Indra. (The Bhagavata says that Vishnu out of the love for his devotee Bali took away his kingdom, in the shape of a gift, so as (i) to enable him to devote his whole soul to God alone; because with his kingdom went away all the cares of it and the vanity of attaching to kingship; and (ii) to enhance his reputation for charity. Footnote 1 on page 28 of F. H.

their luck. People walk miles with bags of money to be utilised in betting, and thus trying their luck when rich Marwaris and others are engaged in the game of dice. Large sums are lost or won on the day in question both by men and women of the Vaisya community especially of the Bombay Presidency and of northern India. Even lookers on, are given gifts every now and then by the winners from their winnings and there are also gift boxes for this or that charity into which small sums are dropped every now and then by this or that winner.

Purchases and sales in future which are nothing but forms of gambling on a gigantic scale are rosorted to by the wealthy merchants of certain parts of India, during the Deepavali week and especially on the Deepavali day and night.

CHAPTER XXV.

KARTIKAI VRATAM.

The Hindu festival going by the name Kartikai is celebrated on the full-moon day in the month of the same name corresponding to the English month October-November, when the moon is in conjunction with the asterism Kritikai (*Pleiades.*)

Though the observance of the Vratha is to propitiate the five elements, greater importance is attached to the propitiation of *Agni* (fire) and all the houses are profusely lighted and illuminated after sunset, in consequence.

The reason why fire is given prominence over the other elements is furnished in the allegorical and deeply spiritual myth in which Lord Siva, one of the Hindu Trinity, is said to have appeared in the form of a pillar of fire to teach the creative and preservative aspects—Brahma and Vishnu—the knowledge of infinity beyond time, space and limit, on this particular occasion.

Brahma is said to have assumed the form of a swan and flown upwards to find the top of the pillar, while Vishnu took the form of a boar to dig down and reach its bottom. The flag-staff or *Dwaja-Stambam* in temples is intended to symbolise this pillar of fire. The Indian *yogis* (sages) say that the pillar of fire is nothing but the halo of brilliant light surrounding and interpenetrating the spinal chord within the spinal column in man.

The peculiar custom of burning heaps of dry leaves, twigs, etc., going by the name of *chokkappanai* in front of temples deserves its rational explanation. The custom appears to have originated from the incidents recorded in the myth wherein Siva is said to have burnt the chariots of certain asuras who were harassing the sages and others on this earth, at a particular period. The *chokkappanai* (the collection of dry leaves, twigs, etc.) are symbolical of the aerial cars of the asuras burnt by the fire emanating from the third eye of Siva.

There are a number of myths emphasising the importance of the observance of this Vratha. King Bali is said to have observed this Vratha to get

rid of a burning sensation all over his body and the goddess Parvathi herself is said to have observed it to be freed from certain sins she had committed, to wit the breaking of a Sivalingam unwittingly, while engaged in single combat with the asura Mahishasura whom she slew.

A preparation of fried rice is considered specially acceptable to lord Siva and the custom appears to have originated from the incident narrated in the Maha Bali myth quoted above. Bali is said to have offered this preparation to Siva to be freed from the burning sensation he felt in every cell of his bodily tissues so to say.

The material—fried rice—is perhaps meant to symbolise the condition of the cells in the body of Bali that were being fried and consumed by the invisible fire. Its offering is intended to convey to Siva the condition of the cells in his body and thus silently to beg for his mercy. Further, Bali perhaps thought that fried rice, when consumed by him, might not build cells causing the burning sensation since they are already subjected to fire by the frying process. Even though the burning sensation might not be altogether put an end to by this diet, yet it might perhaps lessen the severity of the feeling by forming cells incapable of furnishing as much burning matter as cells formed by the cells of cooked rice, raw rice and so on. These customs are symbolical and figurative and consequently the idea conveyed must be taken in a restricted application of the language whose meaning should not be stretched. Siva represents fire as he is the lord of the burning ground. So anything deprived of humidity and subjected to heat, might naturally be taken by people as an acceptable offering to Siva. Hence perhaps arose this custom of fried rice offering to the deity on the occasion.

When temples are located on hills, they are considered to be specially suitable for worship and as highly influence-radiating. As the temple at TIRUVANNAMALAI[1] (fig. 37) in the South Arcot district is one of such temples dedicated to Siva, this festival is observed there with great *eclat* and thousands of people flock thither every year to witness the celebration, take part in them, and derive the blessings of the presiding deity Arunachaleswara.

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1. This place is fully described in Chapter VI of "S. I. S."

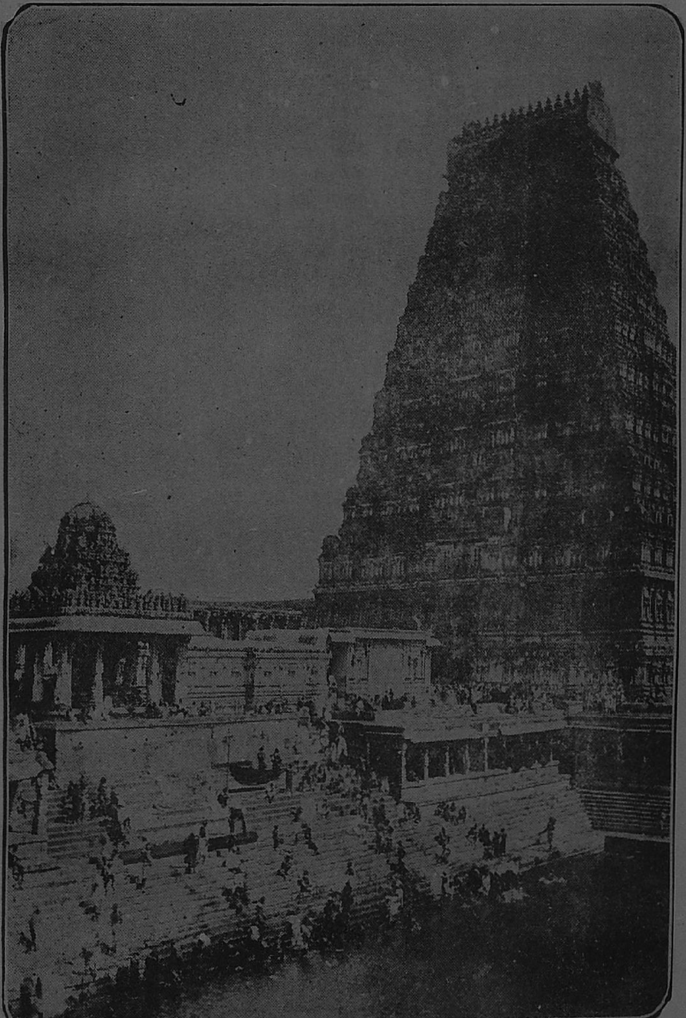

Fig. 37—TIRUVANNAMALAI Temple.

The whole rock is illuminated and a huge flame of torch is lighted at its top after sunset on this festive day.

The hill consists of three fortified peaks. The isolated Tiruvannamalai peak is covered with jungles and is accessible only on foot. A natural column rises from the top of the hill perpendicularly, which the devotees of Siva hold to be a Lingam or phallic symbol. In fact this place is one of the five main Siva centres in India and it is the abode of one of the five Lingams brought from the highest of the super-physical regions to wit Kailas, by Sri Sankaracharia r.

This temple is as great to the devotees of Siva as Srirangam is to the devotees of Vishnu.

The other important places for the observance of this Vratha are TRICHENGODU,[1] PALANI,[2] VEDARANYAM[3] and TIRUCHENDUR.[4]

On the north wall of the central shrine in the Kalahastisvara temple at KALAHASTI[5] is a record relating to the 12th year of the Chola King, Rajendra Choladeva I (1011-43 A. D.) recording gift of gold for celebrating the festival of krithika-dipa.

On the west wall of the first prakara of Brihadamba temple at DEVIKAPURAM[6] is an inscription of the Vijianagara King, Virapratapa Krishnadeva Maharaya dated saka 1443 *Vikrama*, Kartigai, Ekadasi, Monday, corresponding to 9th July 1920 which provides ghee for lamps during the festival of Tirukartigai.

1. This place is fully described in chapter XXXIII of "S. I. S."
2. Do do do XXVIII do
3. Do do do XXI do
4. Do do do XXXII do
5. This is numbered as No. 291 of 1904 M. E. D.
6. Do do 361 of 1912 do

CHAPTER XXVI.

ARUDRA.

The Hindu Arudra festival is observed in the month of Margasira called also Margali, corresponding to the English month December-January, when the asterism Arudra (*orionis*) holds sway. The occasion is one specially favourable to propitiate the dancing aspect of Siva (Fig. 38) (Nataraja) by worshipping him.

Fig. 38—*Nataraja* or the dancing Siva.

The asterism going by the name 'Arudra' has for its presiding deity 'Rudra' an aspect of the destructive force in the universe symbolised.

The constellation going by the name Orion, has in its north-east corner, the asterism 'Arudra' under reference. The constellations, planets, etc., are macro-cosmic centres through which forces are poured out into this solar system for the evolution of micro-cosmic intelligences including men and the devas. Every conscious entity in the system has a micro-cosmic centre. In fact there are indissoluble links of magnetic forces connecting the macro-cosmic and the micro-cosmic centres. For the purification of men's bodies, a certain amount of will power is necessary to emphasise the flow of forces from the macro-cosmic centres through the micro-cosmic ones. Hence the worship of the deities presiding over constellations and asterisms is intented mainly to serve this purpose.

Certain planets and constellations can emphasise various kinds of emotions in men and certain asterisms, etc., mental and spiritual aspects. The asterism 'Arudra' in the constellation Orion can pour into men's bodies, magnetic forces of such a nature as to burn all dross and retain only pure gold—gold taken in its highest-sense of unsullied light. Hence worship of Rudra on this occasion is considered to be specially favourable for purifying lower and coarser emotions, etc., in men.

There is a mystical allegory regarding the dancing aspect of Siva. The key for the understanding of the hidden meaning conveyed by the allegorical myth lies in the word 'Dancing.' It stands for the expression 'Vibration.' We all know that intense vibration shakes off impurities and makes objects highly luminous and brilliant.

The myth says that Siva danced before the sages and others to show his superiority. The sages and others are said to have directed against him various obstructing elements symbolised by serpents, etc. Siva remained unaffected. He wore on his body certain forces symbolised in the myth, and trampled some under feet. This portion of the allegory means that He shook away from him unassimilable forces and refined what could be refined out of the grosser forces.

It is also interesting to note that Siva on this occasion is said to have assumed the guise of a beggar aided by Vishnu in the guise of a woman, ravishingly beautiful to teach the sages and their wives a lesson. Here also the meaning is clear. The expression 'beggar' stands figuratively for the pure light divested of all garments namely impurities. The enchanting damsel stands for the indescribably beautiful and brilliant form of light of Siva's body when cleared of dross adhering to it in the shape of passions, emotions, anger, lust and so forth. In this connection the expression 'Naked Christ should be followed by naked disciples only,' may be brought to mind. The incident in the story of the *Gopis* coming to Sri Krishna naked to receive the garments they have to wear thenceforth, is also highly allegorical. It means that the 'Gopis' should be purified of all grosser feelings and emotions to wear his garment namely the body of light.

The story of the Pariah Nanda[1] who is said to have passed through fire and merged into the body of Nataraja in the Chidambaram temple *as a*

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1. This is illustrated as figure 27 on page 53 of "S. I. S."

mass of light, emphasises what is set forth above. The story itself in brief is as follows :—

In a village named Adhanur, there was a wealthy Brahmin who had a faithful and honest pariah servant named Nandan, to cultivate his lands. This servant was seized with an ardent desire to visit the temple of Nataraja at Chidambaram and pay his humble homage to the deity there. As he was a pariah of the lowest caste, the Brahmin ridiculed the idea of *his* going to Chidambaram to worship Nataraja, considered inaccessible even to the great saints like Sanaka, Sanathana and so forth. Finally to get rid of his importunities, the Brahmin gave him permission to go, after having finished the work of cultivation of his vast lands, thinking that Arudra in the month of Margali, would have passed away, long before he even finished a small fraction of the work assigned to him. But a miracle was performed for Nanda by Nataraja, and the work of cultivation of the Brahmin's field was finished in a single night without any defect at all in the operation!! The Brahmin was convinced of Nandan's greatness and sent him to Chidambaram after having begged him to forgive him and to bless him with a knowledge of God. At Chidambaram Nanda passed through fire to get purified of his low birth as a pariah and merged in Nataraja as a mass of brilliant light!!!

There is a curious custom that a kind of preparation called '*Kali*' is to be prepared to propitiate Nataraja on this occasion. The myth deriving the origin of the custom is in brief as follows :—

Once there was a great devotee of Nataraja named Sendanar. The king not recognising his greatness had him thrown in prison. His wife and son were eking out their livelihood by begging, when one day the lad came to his mother in tears since he was insulted by his companions saying that he had no legitimate father. The woman approached her husband's teacher and master one famous Pattinathar, at whose prayer, the elephant-headed deity Vinayaka restored Sendanar to his wife in a miraculous manner.

Sendanar was then directed to go to Chidambaram, earn money by gathering twigs for fuel and selling it to the people, and with the money realised to feed a devotee of Siva every day.

He was doing this for a long time, but on account of incessant heavy rain, his fuel was wet and so could not command any buyer, paying cash for

it. Nothing daunted, he exchanged his bundle of twigs on a particular day which happened to be the Arudra day for a quantity of flour and with it prepared this simple preparation called 'Kali' and offered it to Nataraja. Before partaking of it, he searched and also waited for a devotee of Siva who would partake of it first. Lord Nataraja himself is said to have partaken of the preparation in the guise of an aged Brahmin and disappeared with a quantity of it which was subsequently found strewn in his temple to

be picked up and eaten by the people!! The custom of preparing 'Kali' on the Arudra day is said to have originated from this incident.

Although this festival is observed in all places considered sacred to Siva, yet CHIDAMBARAM (Figs. 39 to 42) in the South Arcot district is said to be specially important.

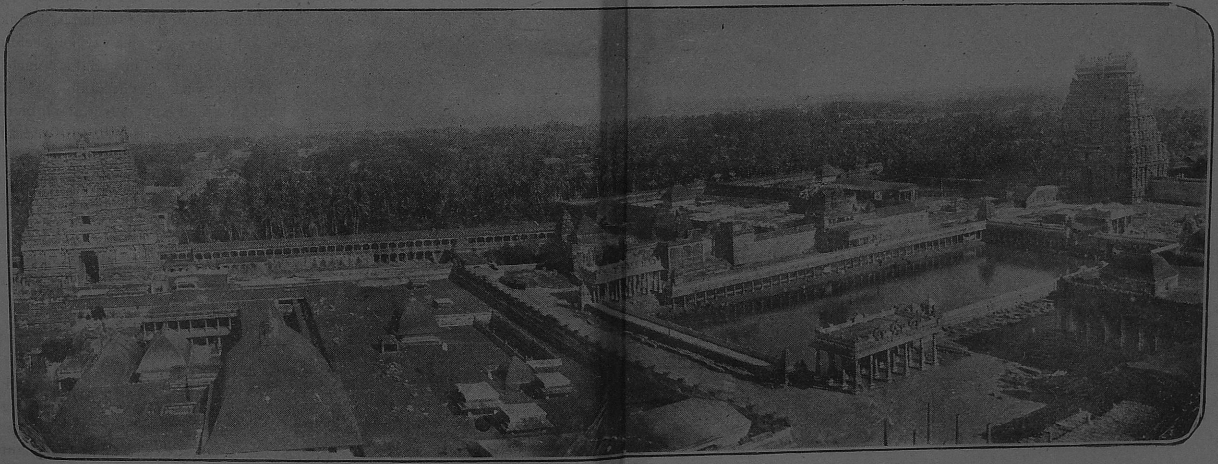

Fig. 39—CHIDAMBARAM Temple, general view.

Fig. 40—CHIDAMBARAM Temple *gopura*.

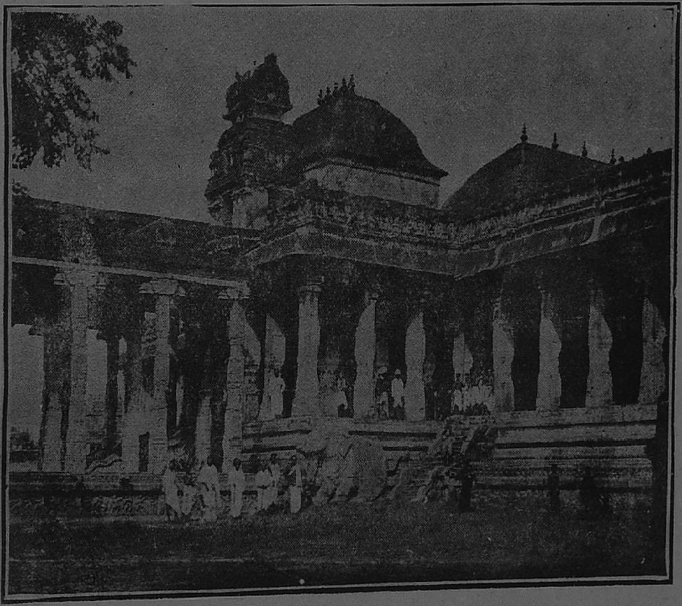

Fig. 42—CHIDAMBARAM 1000-pillared hall.

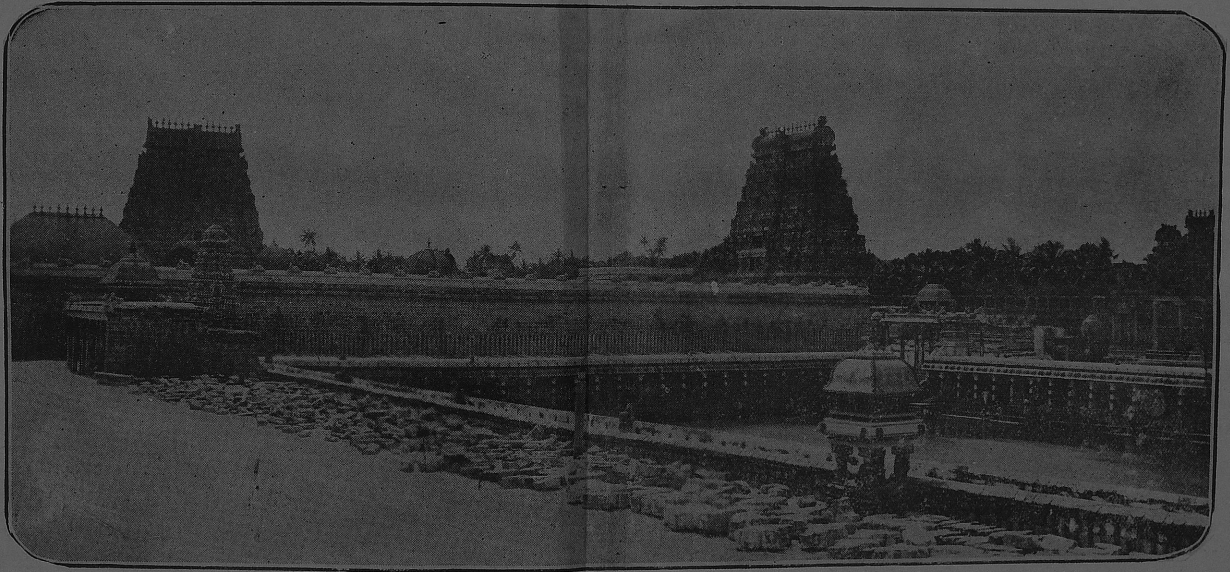

Fig. 41—CHIDAMBARAM Temple with the tank inside.

The other places held sacred for the worship of Nataraja and for the observance of the Arudra festival are PERUR near Coimbatore, KUTTALAM[1] near Tenkasi, TINNEVELLY,[2] MADURA[3] and TIRUVALANGADU near Madras.

At TIRUVORRIYUR near Madras in the temple of Audipurisvara there are a number of lithic records, relating to gifts for the observance of the festival. On the south wall of the central shrine is a record of king Rajendrachola I (A. D. 1012—43), for bathing the God Mahadeva of that

1. This place is fully dealt with in Chapter XXXI of "S. I. S."
2. Do. do. do. do. XXIX do.
3. These are numbered as 104 and 109 of 1912 in the record of M.E.D.

place with clarified butter on the birthday festival of the king which fell on the Nakshatra Tiruvadirai in the month of Margali. Again, there is another of the 8th year of king Rajarajadeva making a gift of money for offerings to the god Karanai Vitankadeva, on the day of Tiruvadirai in the month of Margali.

On the north wall of the first prakara of the Arunajatesvara temple at TIRRUPPANANDAL[1] near Kumbakonam is a record of a Vijianagara king recording gift of land for conducting the festival of Margali-Tiruvadirai.

1. These are numbered as 42 of 1914 in the record of M. E. D.

The south wall of the mandapa in front of the Virattanesvara temple at VALVAUR[1] near Mayavaram contains a record of the 5th year of the Chola king Rajadhirajadeva (= 1st July, 1167) giving gift of money for getting the *Tiruvembavai* recited before the image of Vadavurali-Nayanar on Margali-Tiruvadirai festival day.

On the north wall of the central shrine in the Karkotakesvara temple at KAMARASAVALLI,[2] Trichinopoly district, is an inscription dated in the reign of Chola king Rajendrachola, 29th year, Risabha, Wednesday, Arudra, corresponding to May 6th, A. D., 1041, for performing the dance—*Sakkai Kuttu* thrice on each of the festivals Margali-Tiruvadirai and Vaigasi-Tiruvadirai.

On the west wall of the central shrine in the Mahalingasvaran temple at TIRUVIDAIMARUTHUR[3] is a record relating to the 37th year of king Parantaka I making gift of land for celebrating the Tiruvadirai festival.

On the western wall of the Nagesvarasvarin temple in SULURPETA[4], Nellore district, is a record dated in the 2nd year of king Vijiayaganda-gopaladeva, giving land for the performance of a festival during Tiruvadirai.

1. These are numbered as 421 of 1912 in the record of M. E. D.
2. Do. do. 65 1914 do. do.
3. Do. do. 202 1907 do. do.
4. This is item No. 633 on page 1136 Vol. II of I. M. P.

CHAPTER XXVII.

VAIKUNTA EKADASI.

The famous Vaikunta Ekadasi day of the Hindus is said to be the eleventh day of the bright fortnight in the month of Margasira or Margali, corresponding to the English month December-January. The occasion also goes by the names, "*Mokshadah-Ekadasi,*" or Ekadasi that could secure for the observer of the Vratha freedom from birth and death and liberation from bondage and "*Mukkodi Ekadasi,*" or Ekadasi equal in potency to innumerable ordinary Ekadasi occasions put together.

Fig. 43—Vishnu lying under an *Aswatha* (*Ficus religiosa tree.*)

The observance of the Vratha consists in rigid fasting followed by the worship of Vishnu (Fig. 43) one of the Hindu Trinity representing the preservative aspect in the universe, and it is believed to have the effect of conferring on the observer long-life, happiness and strength of body.

The origin of the names Vaikunta Ekadasi and Mukkodi Ekadasi and the importance attached to the occasion are attributed to the incidents recorded in the following tradition :—

In the bygone Krita age called the golden age, there existed an asura named 'Muran' in the city of Chandravathi, who was harassing the devas and giving them a good deal of trouble. To get rid of him, and his troubles, the devas approached Vishnu reposing on the ocean of milk on the back of a hydra, and made representations. Vishnu thereupon is said to have condescended to descend on this mortal earth as an Avathar or incarnation and destroy the asura. As his incarnation and the

destruction of the asura are said to have taken place on an Ekadasi day, and as he had descended from his abode in Vaikunta, a region of bliss in the universe, the day came to be known as Vaikunta Ekadasi day.

The derivation of the name Ekadasi is allegorical and interesting. Vishnu is said to have fallen into a swoon while about to fight with the asuras, and a damsel of exquisite beauty is said to have arisen out of his body (Fig. 44) and destroyed the asuras for him. This damsel was

Fig. 44—*Ekadasi* Goddess overcoming an asura.

subsequently named 'Ekadasi' and the observers of the Ekadasi Vratha are said to be blessed by this divine-born damsel of a deity.

The expression 'Mukkodi' is said to have originated from the fact that three crores of devas came into this mortal world with Vishnu where he incarnated to destroy the asuras.

There is an interesting allegorical myth of deep significance, emphasising the importance of the observance of Ekadasi Vratha in general, and Vaikunta Ekadasi in particular. It is in brief as follows :—

Once upon a time, there ruled over this earth a king named 'Rukmangadha.' He had a fine *Nanda-Vana* or flower garden where bloomed all sorts of fine beautiful and rare flowers. Indra, the God of the celestials, was worshipping the Almighty deity and was in sore need for flowers for doing it well. He came to know of Rukmangadha's garden and the flowers that grew there. So he deputed some of his devas to procure

him enough flowers from there, and they were duly executing his orders for a long time. King Rukmangadha, though he missed the flowers from his garden every day, could not find out the thieves who stole them since devas were invisible to mortals, and the flowers as we know were being taken daily by the devas.

The king's gardeners, zealous in the discharge of their duty, were carefully watching for any intruder on whom the charge of theft of the garden flowers might be laid.

One day, a sage named Jabali of great yogic power and merit, having selected a portion of Rukmangadha's flower garden, was meditating upon the one supreme intelligence pervading the universe, completely oblivious to all external world. The gardeners took him for a thief, disturbed him from his meditations and brought him before the king, after having accused him of theft of the flowers from the royal garden.

The king coming to know of Jabali's greatness and the folly of his menials in having given offence to the mighty sage, approached him with great reverence, and begged to be forgiven for the wrongs inflicted on the holy personage. The sage, an embodiment of patience, mercy and forgiveness, not only pardoned the king, but also gave him certain herbs which when burnt in the royal flower garden, would reveal to him the mystery of the theft of flowers.

The deva minions of Indra when they came to the royal gardens to gather flowers for their master's worship as usual were materialised by the virtue of the plant burnt there by the orders of the king and became visible to ordinary mortals. They disclosed to the king their mission which resulted in the daily disappearance of flowers from his garden and as they were unable to ascend to their abode—the heavens—on account of the gross material particles clinging to their ethereal body of light and making it heavy, had to utilise the merit a washer woman had obtained by the observance of this Ekadasi Vratha.

The story is of course allegorical and is meant to show that the clogging sensation of material existence due to gross particles gathering around the jivas—egos—may be made to disappear by the devotional observance of the Vratha, which could shake off the grosser particles by the intensity of the vibrations, resulting in quietitude, physical, emotional and mental. Though all temples dedicated to Vishnu, are important for the

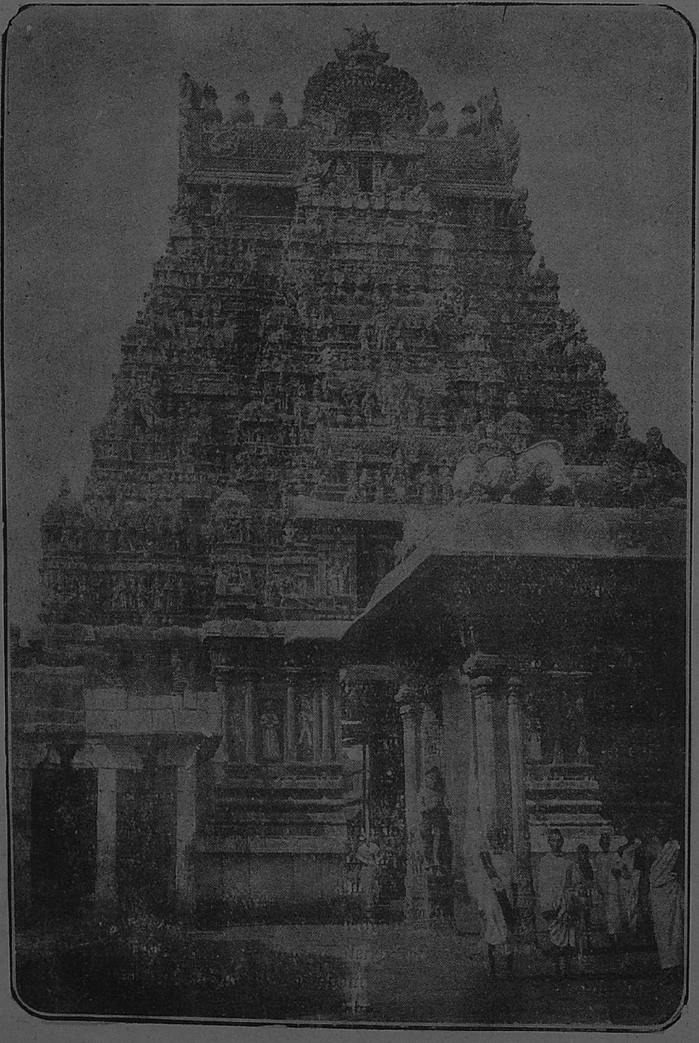

Fig. 45—SRIRANGAM Temple *gopura*.

Fig. 46--SRIRANGAM Temple *gopura*.

Fig. 47—SRIRANGAM Temple entrance.

Fig. 48—SRIRANGAM Temple entrance.

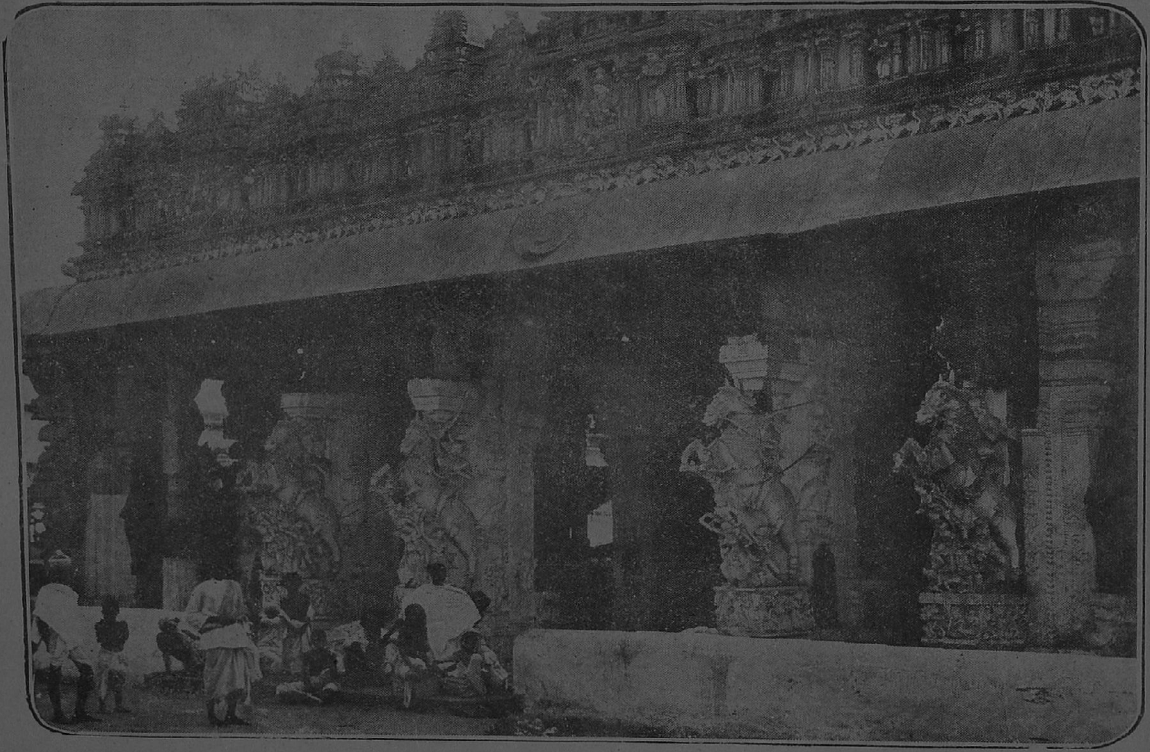

Fig. 49—SRIRANGAM Temple sculptured mandapa (hall)

observance of this Vratha, yet the Ranganada temple at SRIRANGAM[1] (Figs. 45 to 49) in Trichinopoly district is considered specially important.

On the rock to the west of the boulder known as Nagargundu, west of steps leading to the Ardranarisvara temple on the hill at TIRUCHCHENGODU,[2] Salem district, is a record relating to the 13th year of chola king Rajakesarivarman making gifts of gold for feeding 20 Brahmans on the day of Ekadasi.

1. This place is fully dealt within Chapter XXVI of "S. I. S."
2. This is numbered as 629 of 1905 in the records of the M. E. D.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

The following table* shows the current names of the divisions of time in the different languages.

Language,	60 =	60 =	7 =	2 =	2 =	6 =	2 =	
English.	Indian minute.	Indian hour	Day.	Week.	Fortnight.	Month.	Half-year.	Year.
Sanskrit.	Vinaudy.	Naudy.	Dinam.	Vauram.	Paksham.	Mausam.	Ayanam.	Samvatsaram.
Tamil.	Vinaudy.	Nauzhigai.	Naul.	Vauram.	Paksham.	Mausam.	Ayanam.	Varsham.
Telugu.	Vighadiya.	Ghadiya.	Dinam.	Vauram.	Paksham.	Mausam.	Ayanam.	Samvatsaram.
Canarese	Vighaligey.	Ghaligey.	Dinam.	Vauram.	Paksham.	Tingal.	Ayanam.	Varsham.
Malayalam.	Vinaudicay.	Nauzhigai.	Divasam.	Autchavattam.	Paksham.	Mausam.	Ayanam.	Varsham.

* Extract from page 143 of M. A. M. P.

APPENDIX II.

The following table* shows the signs of the fixed sidereal zodiac displayed against lunar mansions.

No.	Hindu Name.	European Name.	Dravidian Solar Months.	Approximate beginning of English month.	REMARKS.
1	Meisham (ram).	Aries (ram).	Chitrai.	April 12th.	
2	Rishabham (bull).	Tauras (bull).	Vaikhasi.	May 13th.	
3	Mithunam (twins).	Gemini (twins).	Auni.	June 13th.	
4	Karkatakam (crab).	Cancer (crab).	Audi.	July 15th.	
5	Simham (lion).	Leo (lion).	Auvani.	August 15th.	
6	Kanni (virgin).	Virgo (virgin).	Purattasi.	September 15th.	
7	Tulam (balance).	Libra (balance).	Aippasi.	October 16th.	
8	Vrichikham (scorpion).	Scorpio (scorpion).	Kartigai.	November 15th.	
9	Dhanus (bow).	Sagittarius (archer).	Margali.	December 14th.	
10	Makaram (alligator).	Capricornus (goat).	Tai.	January 12th.	
11	Kumbham (pot).	Aquarius (water-man).	Masi.	February 12th.	
12	Meenam (fish).	Pisces (fish).	Panguni.	March 12th.	

* Extract from page 754 of M. A. M. P.

APPENDIX III.

The following* are the different vernacular names for the points of the compass; with their presiding deities, etc., in the Hindu system according to the Hindu *Sastras*.

No.	English.	Sanskrit.	Tamil.	Telugu.	Canarese.	Malayalam.	Presiding deities (Ashta-dikpalakas.)	Elephants of the quarters (Ashta-dikgajams).
1	North	Uttiram	Vadak	Uttiram	Vadagu	Vadak	Kubera	Saurabuman
2	North-east	Esanyam	Vada-kizak	Esanyam	Esanyam	Vada-kizak	Esana	Supradeepam
3	East	Poorvam	Kizak	Toorp	Moodloo	Kizak	Indra	Airavatam
4	South-east	Agneyam	Ten-kizak	Agneyam	Temmoodloo	Tek-kizak	Agni	Pundareekam
5	South	Dakshinam	Terkku	Dakshinam	Tenka	Tek	Yama	Vaumanam
6	South-west	Neirritam	Ten-merk	Neirritam	Tempadoovaloo	Tek-padinyaur	Nirriti	Kumudam
7	West	Pachchimam	Merk	Pademara	Padoovaloo	Padinyaur	Varuna	Anjanam
8	North-west	Vauyavyam	Vadamerk	Vauyavyam	Vauyavyam	Vadak-padinyaur	Vayu	Pushpadantam

* Extract from page 902 of M. A. M. P.

APPENDIX IV.

The twenty-seven* *Nakshattras* or Asterisms (Constellations) are:—

1. Asvini—*Beta* Arietis (Asvinau—3 stars).
2. Bharani—35 Arietis or Musca (Yamah—3 stars).
3. Krittika—*Pi* Tauri or Pleiades (Agnih—6 stars).
4. Rohini—*Alpha* Tauri or Aldebaran (Prajapatih—5 stars).
5. Mrigasira—*Lambda* Orionis (Somah—3 stars).
6. Ardra—*Alpha* Orionis (Rudrah—1 star).
7. Punarvasu—*Beta* Geminorum or Pollux (Aditih—5 or 4 stars).
8. Pushya—*Delta* Cancri (Brihaspatih—3 or 7 stars).
9. Aslesha—*Epsilon* Hydrae (Sarpah—6 or 5 stars).
10. Magha—*Alpha* Leonis Regulus (Pitarah—5 or 4 stars).
11. Purva-Phalguni—*Delta* Leonis (Bhagah—2 stars).
12. Uttara-Phalguni—*Beta* Leonis (Aryama—2 ,,)
13. Hasta-*Delta* Corvi (Savita—5 stars).
14. Chittra—*Alpha* Virginis or Spica (Tvashta—1 or 6 stars).
15. Svati—*Alpha* Bootes or Arcturus (Vayuh—1 star).
16. Visakha—*Lota* Librae (Indragni—5 or 4 stars).
17. Anuradha—*Delta* Scorpionis (Mitrah—3 or 4 stars).
18. Jyeshtha—*Alpha* Scorpionis or Antares (Indrah—3 stars).
19. Mula—*Lambda* Scorpionis (Nirritoh—5 or 11 stars).
20. Purvashadha—*Delta* Sagittarii (Apah—2 or 4 stars).
21. Uttarashadha—*Sigma* Sagittarii (Visvedevah—4 stars).
22. Sravana—*Alpha* Aquilae or Al-tair (Vishnuh—3 ,,)
23. Dhanishtha—*Beta* Delphini (Vasavah—3 or 4 stars).
24. Satabhisha—*Lambda* Aquarii (Varunah—3 or 100 stars).
25. Purva-Bhadrapada—*Alpha* Pegasi (Aja Ekapad—2 stars).
26. Uttara-Bhadrapada—*Gamma* Pegasi or Andromedae (Ahirbudhnyah—2 stars).
27. Revati—*Zeta* Piscium (Pusha—3 or 32 stars).

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* Pages 211 and 212 A. S.

APPENDIX V.

*Comparison between the deities of the Brahmanical system and those of Rome and Egypt.—The following table will show the general correspondence between the principal Hindu deities of Southern India and those of Rome and Egypt. The worship of Osiris and Isis more especially is nearly related in its essential points to the worship of Siva and his consort Bhawani or Parvathi.

Indian.	Roman.	Egyptian.
Siva.	Jupiter.	Osiris.
Durga.	Ceres.	Isis.
Bhagavatee.	Venus.	Isis.
Bhawani or Parvathi.	Juno.	Isis.
Kali.	Proserpine.	Isis.
Annapurna.	Ceres.	Isis.
Ganesh.	Janus.	Isis
Nundy.	Minotaurus.	Apis.
Vishnoo.	Jupiter.	Osiris.
Lutchmee.	Venus.	Isis.
Krishna.	Apollo.	Osiris.
Brahma.	Jupiter.	Osiris.
Surya.	Apollo.	Horus.
Kubera.	Plutus.	Horus.
Kartigay.	Mars.	Papremis.
Yama.	Pluto.	Serapis
Indra.	Jupiter tonans.	Osiris.
Viswakurma.	Vulcan.	Thoth.
Boodh.	Neptune.	Osiris.
Gangah.	Styx.	Nile.
Menoo.	Minos.	Menes.
Narada.	Mercury.	Apis.

* Footnote 26 on page 79 of M A. M. P., Vol. I.

*The following list is taken from "PRINSEP'S USEFUL TABLES" published in 1834 :—

1. The Infinite Almighty Creator, of the Vethas, Brahm.

The Hindu Trinity, or Trimurti :	Brahma,	Vishnu,	Siva.
Their consorts :	Saraswati, Sakti or Maya,	Lakshmi, Padma or Sri,	Parvathi, Bhawani or Durga.
Their attributes :	Creator,	Preserver,	Destroyer.
Their attendant *vahan* or vehicle:	Hamsa (goose),	Garuda (bird),	Nandi (bull).
Their symbols :	Times, Air,	Water,	Fire.
Their stations :	Meru,	The Sun,	Jupiter.
Their common titles, A. U. M.	Parameswara,	Narayana,	Mahadeva.
Figure under which worshipped :	Mentally,	Saligram and 9 *avatharas*,	The *lingam*, under his million epithets.
Analogues in Western mythology :	Saturn,	Jupiter,	Jupiter.

2. Other members of the Hindu pantheon, and their supposed analogues in Western mythology, according to Sir. Wm. Jones.

Saraswati.	Minerva, patroness of learning.
Ganesha.	Janus, god of wisdom.
Indra.	Jupiter, god of firmament.
Varuna.	Neptune, god of water.
Prithvi.	Cybele, goddess of earth.
Viswakarma.	Vulcan, architect of gods.
Kartikaya or Skanda.	Mars, god of war.
Kama.	Cupid, god of love.
Surya, or Arka.	Sol, the sun, Mithra, the same.
Hanuman, son of Pavana.	Pan, the monkey-god
Rama.	Bacchus, god of wine.
Yama.	Pluto or Minos.
Heracula,	Hercules.

* Pages 76 and 77 F. F. F.

Aswiculapa.	Aesculapius (genii).
Vaitarini.	The river Styx.
Durga.	Juno.
Narada.	Mercury, music.
Krishna.	Apollo.
Bhawani.	Venus.
Kali or Durga	Proserpine.
Agni.	Vulcan, Fire.
Swaha.	Vesta (his wife).
Aswini-kumara.	Castor and Pollux.
Aruna.	Aurora.
Atavi Devi.	Diana.
Kubera.	Plutus, god of riches.
Gangah.	The river Ganges.
Vayu.	Aeolus.
Sri.	Ceres.
Anna purna.	Anna Parenna.

* The gods and goddesses of Greece are but copies of their Hindu originals.

Jupiter.	Stands for	Indra.
Juno.	,,	Durga or Parwathi (Indrani.)
Apollo.	,,	Krishna.
Venus.	,,	Rati.
Ceres.	,,	Sri.
Cybele.	,,	Prithvi.
Neptune and Uranus.	,,	Varuna.
Minerva.	,,	Saraswati.
Mars.	,,	Skand.
Pluto.	,,	Yama.
Plutus.	,,	Kubera.
Vulcan.	,,	Viswakarma.
Çupid.	,,	Kama.
Mercury.	,,	Narada.
Aurora.	,,	Ushas.
Aeolus.	,,	Vayu.
Janus.	,,	Ganesha.
Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux.)	,,	Aswini-Kumara
Styx.	,,	Vaitarni.
Ida.	,,	Kailas.
Olympus.	,,	Meru,

Pages 407 and 408 H. S.

APPENDIX VI.

* The *Rupamandana* gives a summary of the description of the colours, weapons and emblems and vehicles and seats of the nine *grahas*, which may be tabularly presented thus :—

Name of the deity.	Weapons etc.			Seat and vehicle.	Remarks.
	Colour.	Right-hand.	Left-hand.		
Surya.	White.	Padma.	Padma.	Chariot with seven horses.	All the nine deities should be adorned with *kirita* and *ratna-kundalas.*
Soma.	do.	Kumud	Kumuda.	Chariot with ten horses.	
Bhauma.	Red.	Danda.	Kamandala.	A goat.	
Budha.	Yellow.	Hands in	Yogamudra	Sarpasana.	
Guru.	do.	Akshamala.	Kamandalu.	Hamsa.	
Sukra.	White.	do.	do.	A frog.	
Sani.	Black.	Danda.	do.		
Rahu.	Smoke-colour.			A sacrificial pit (*kunda*).	
Ketu.	do.	Armsfolded as in the *anjali* attitude.		The lower portion of the body of Rahu should be that of a snake.	

* Pages 322 and 323 E. H. I., Vol. I, Part I.

APPENDIX VII.

* *NARRATIVES ABOUT PLANETS.*

Departments.	Sun.	Moon.	Mars.	Mercury.	Jupiter.	Venus.	Saturn.
Color.	Copper.	White.	Red.	Green.	Yellow.	Mixed (Gold & Silver).	Black.
Nature.	Sathwa.	Sathwa.	Thamas.	Rajas.	Sathwa.	Rajas.	Thamas.
Sex.	Male.	Female.	Male.	Enunch (female).	Male.	Female.	Enunch (Male).
Caste.	Kshatrya.	Vaisya.	Kshatrya.	Sudra.	Brahmana.	Brahmana.	Chandala.
Elements.	Fire.	Water.	Fire.	Earth.	Ether.	Water.	Air.
Deities.	Agni.	Varuna.	Subra-manya.	Vishnu.	Indra.	Indrani.	Brahma.
Garments.	Thick.	New.	Half-burnt.	Wet.	Shabby.	Strong.	Rag.
Metals.	Copper.	Gems.	Gold.	Brass.	Silver.	Pearls.	Iron (lead).
Parts.	Bones.	Blood.	Marrow.	Skin.	Flesh & brain.	Semen.	Muscles.
Grains.	Wheat.	Paddy.	Lentil.	Green-gram.	Bengal-gram.	Beans.	Sesamum.
Seasons.	Summer.	Winter.	Summer.	Autumn.	Snow.	Spring.	All seasons.
Taste.	Pungent.	Salt.	Acerbity.	Mixed.	Sweet & cool.	Sour.	Bitter & Astringent.
Residence.	Place of worship.	Springs.	Fire.	Playground.	Store-house.	Bed-chamber.	Dustbin.
Tempera-ment.	Bilious.	Phleg-matic.	Bilious.	Mixed.	Phlegmatic.	Windy & Phlegmatic.	Windy.

* Page 248 of K.

APPENDIX VIII.

* INTRODUCTION TO HINDU FESTIVALS.

(From Wilson's *Essays on the Religion of the Hindus*, Vol. II., p. 151).

"Among all the nations of the ancient world a considerable portion of the year was devoted to the solemnization of public festivals, at which the people found in the assemblage of multitudes, in the exhibition of games, and in religious pageants and ceremonies, a compensation for the want of those more refined entertainments which are created by the necessities and the luxury of a more advanced stage of civilization. Some of these primitive celebrations have retained their hold upon national tastes and feelings long after their origin and meaning were forgotten, and become interwoven with new conditions of society, with altered manners and institutions, and with a total change of religion. In all the countries of Europe they have left at least traces of their former prevalence in the nomenclature of our calendars, and many of the holidays which are appropriated to the saints of the Christian Church have been borrowed from the public festivals of ancient paganism. In proportion also as nations, or as different classes of the same nation, retain their primitive habits, the observances of olden times enjoy their veneration, and interest their affections. They are, however, fast fading in the Western world, even from the faith of tradition, before the extension of knowledge and refinement, and before the augmented demands for toil which the present artificial modes of life impose, when holidays are denounced as an unprofitable interruption of productive industry, and a festival or a fair is condemned as a wasteful expenditure of time and money. It is only, therefore, in regions remote from the reach of the taskmaster, where exemption from work is occasionally the equal right of all classes of the community, that we may expect to find the red letters of the Calendar significant signs– importing what they designate—public holidays—days on which the artificer and the peasant rest from physical exertion, and spend some passing hours in a kindly communion of idleness with their fellows, in which, if the plough stands still and anvil is silent, the spirit of social intercourse is kept alive, and man is allowed to feel that he was born for some nobler end than to earn the scanty bread of the pauper by the unrelaxing labour of the slave.

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* Pages 1 to 5 of H. F.

It is in the remote East, and especially in India, that we may expect to find the living representation of ancient observances, and the still existing solemnizations which delighted the nations of antiquity, and we shall not be altogether disappointed ; although even here they begin to languish under the influence of a foreign government, under the unsympathizing superiority which looks upon the enjoyments of a different race with disdain, under the prevalence of the doctrine with regards public holidays as deductions from public wealth, and under the principles of a system of religious faith which, although it might be indulgent to popular recreations, cannot withhold its disapprobation of them when their objects and origin are connected with falsehood and superstition. From the operation of these causes, the Hindu festivals have already diminshed both in frequency and in attraction ; and they may become, in the course of time, as little familiar to the people of India as those of European institution are to the nations of the West. They will then, perhaps, become also objects of curiosity and interest ; and in anticipation of that period, and in order to secure an account of them whilst it is still possible to learn what they are, I propose to offer to the Society some notices of the religious Fasti of the Hindus and Calendar of their public festivals.

The different celebrations of the Hindus are specified in their Almanacs and are described at length in different works, such as the Tithi Tattwa, Tithi Kritya, Vratarka, Kala Nirnaya, the Kalpa Druma of Jaya Sinha, and others, and also in passages of several of the Puranas, particularly in the Bhavishyottara, which, as it usually occurs, treats exclusively of the festivals. The obervances are, for the most part, the same in the different provinces of India, but there are some peculiar to peculiar localities ; and even those which are universally held, enjoy various degrees of popularity in different places, and are celebrated with various local modifications. The periods also vary within certain limits, according as the lunar month is reckoned to begin from the new-moon, or from the full-moon ; the former mode of computation prevailing in Bengal and in Telingana, whilst in Hindustan and in the Tamil countries of the South the latter is followed.* My opportunities of personal observation have been in a great degree limited to Bengal, and for the rest of India I can speak but imperfectly of any existing practices which may not exactly conform to those enjoined by original works, or of which no account has been published by actual observer. One object of communicating these notices to the Society is, therefore, the supplying of this

* [Prinsep's useful Tables, ed. E. Thomas, p. 154 f.]

deficiency. Amongst the Members of the Society* are many who, in the course of their public services, must have witnessed the celebration of the Hindu festivals in different and distant places: their better knowledge will enable them to furnish correct information respecting those local peculiarities with which I am unacquainted; and I hope that they may be induced to favour the Society with the results of their experience, and contribute to render the description of the popular festivals of the Hindus as complete and authentic as those who may take an interest in the topic have a right to expect from us.

Upon the examining the Fasti of the nations of antiquity, it is obvious that many of their festivals originated either from the same or similar motives. They all bear a religious character, inasmuch as religious worship formed part of the celebration; but that was the spirit of the time. However erroneously directed, the feelings of the multitude in the heathen world associated the powers of heaven, real or imaginary, with all their transactions but the sources to which I more especially refer, however closely linked with this common sentiment, are in some degree varieties of it: they constitute the species, and are obviously reducible to two principal distinctions, which may be regarded as universal or particular. The universal festivals which are probably traceable among all nations elevated above barbarism, and which may have been handed down by tradition from the earliest periods in the history of the human race, are manifestly astronomical, and are intended to commemorate the revolutions of the planets, the alterations of the seasons, and the recurrence of cyclical intervals of longer or shorter duration. The particular festivals are those arising out of national forms of religious worship, out of the different mythological creations of priests or poets, or out of imperfect narratives, transmitted orally through succeeding generations, of occurences anterior to historical record. In as far as these traditions may have related to the great mass of mankind, before it was broken up into detached communities, or as the mythological fictions may typify real personages or events of the same era, or may embody objects, likely to be presented to the imaginations of men under similar aspects, we need not be surprised to meet with analogies of deep interest, even in the festivals which are of particular institution. It is, however, in those which

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*The Bengal Royal Asiatic Society, in whose Journal the account first appeared, 1849. Vol. IX. pp. 10-110.

relate to the course of time and the phenomena of the planetary sphere that anologies are most likely to occur, and do, in fact, present themselves in the practices of distant and apparently unconnected races.

The coincidences that may be discovered between the universal or particular festivals of the various nations of antiquity, form a subject that well deserves careful and patient investigation. It would, in all probability, tend to confirm the remarkable results which comparative philology has of late so unanswerably demonstrated, and furnish corroborative testimony of the relationship of races, which, however dissimilar now, in physical configuration, social condition, and national character, are proved to be of kindred origin by the unequivocal affinities of language. In like manner as the Greek, Latin, Teutonic, Celtic, Salavonic, and Sanskrit tongues have been shown to be allied by principles common to them all, so in all probability it would be found that the festivals and holidays which once animated the cities of Athens and Rome, the forests of Germany and the steppes of Russia, are still continuing to afford seasons of public recreation to the dark complexioned tribes that people the borders of the Indus and the Ganges. The full development of these identifications is, however, a work of time and of research exceeding what I can bestow upon it; and I must be content with contributing only that portion of the materials requisite for its investigation which relates to the Fasti of the Hindus, briefly suggesting, as I proceed, one or two of the most obvious points of apparent similarity.

The subject of the Festivals of the Hindu year was introduced to the Asiatic Society of Bengal by Sir William Jones, who published a paper on it in the third volume of the Researches. What he thought of the inquiry is evident from the manner in which he speaks of the authority whence his information was derived, and which he calls a wonderfully curious tract of the learned and celebrated Raghunandana. It was no doubt this Tithi Tattwa, a standard text-book, as are all the works of the same author, in Bengal. Sir William Jones, however, has taken from this work only the heads of the descriptions, and omits all the particulars into which it enters, with the exceptions of a few brief notes; and his details are neither sufficiently full nor interesting to inspire others with the sentiments with which he contemplated the subject. Some years ago I collected materials for its

fuller elucidation, and published in one of the Calcutta papers brief notices of the festivals as they occurred; but the notices were merely popular, and were necessarily short and unconnected, and they have never been presented in a collective form. The topic is one, therefore, which, if destitute of other recommendation, possesses, even in these latter days, that of some degree of novelty, and may on this account be further acceptable to the Society.

As remarked by Sir William Jones, although most of the Indian fasts and festivals are regulated by the days of the moon, yet the most solemn and remarkable of them have a manifest reference to the supposed motions of the sun. An attempt is usually made to adjust the one to the other; but the principles on which the adjustment of the solar to the lunar year is based, are of a somewhat complicated character, and are not essential to a knowledge of the periods at which the festivals are held, and which, with a few exceptions, are sufficiently determinate."

APPENDIX IX.

SKETCH* ACCOUNT OF THE PRINCIPAL HINDOO RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS OF SOUTHERN INDIA—

Introduction.—Besides the feasts peculiar to each district and temple, which return several times in the course of a year, the Hindoos have many more, which are held only once a year, and are commonly observed through the whole country The religious festivals are closely connected with the systems of astronomy and chronology by which their periods are determined. The pure Tamil festivals follow the solar computation, and happen on the same day each year; unless there is a variation of one day on account of minor astronomical disturbances. The only representatives of this class at the present day are Pongal in the winter, the Tamil New-year in the spring, and the Audipundigay in mid-year. The rest are all reckoned by lunar time (like the English Easter), and fall at different dates each year; and as these calculations depend upon the particular data and mode of reckoning that may be adopted, the times of certain festivals differ slightly even in the same year in various parts of the country, in the same way that Easter is kept at different dates in the same year by the members of the Greek and Latin churches. Hence the high estimation in which almanacs are held by the Hindoos.

A description of each of the principal festivals is given below beginning with the Teloogoo new year :—

(2) *Telugu New Year.*—This falls at the end of March or beginning of April. It is also the first day of the year for Canarese and Mahrattas, but not for Tamils. Three days' rejoicing takes place, with exhibitions of fireworks and discharging 8 guns. Early in the morning each person anoints his body with oil and bathes in warm water. In the evening the family priest reads out passages from the new almanac, the family listening to hear their fortune during the coming year.

(3) *Shree Ramanavamy.*—This is the birthday of Dasharatha Rama, an incarnation of Vishnoo. It is observed chiefly by Mahratta Vaishnavites, but also to some extent by the Canarese and Teloogoos. It is not a Dravidian festival, and was introduced into the country by the Mahrattas. It occurs on the ninth day of the month Chaitra, or about the end of March. The image of the hero is set up, adorned, and worshipped; and portions of the

* Footnote 34 on pp. 92 to 94 of M. A. M. P., Vol. I.

Ramayana, or poetical history of Rama, his romantic adventures in search of his wife, and his success in rescuing her from the giants who had carried her off, are sung to large audiences. Festivals are also observed in Vishnoo temples, especially in the shrines dedicated to Rama, for ten days ending with the birthday. In the Tamil countries, the birthday is observed in the Tamil month of Chaitra, which is a month later.

(4) *Mylapore Ratotsavam.*—This is a local car festival. It takes place about the seventh day of Pungoony, that is to say, in March or April. It is held in honour of the God Kapauleshwara, and lasts ten days. The car procession takes place on the seventh day.

(5) *Mylapore Aroopatmoovar.*—This falls on the day after the last. Sixty-three saints are taken in procession.

(6) *Pungoony Oottiram.*—This takes place in the month of Pungoony, that is to say, in March or April. It lasts fifteen days. Its origin is in the following tale. Siva was conducting the united offices of the Trinity—creating, preserving, and destroying. His consort, Parvati, went behind her husband and put her hands over his eyes, the result being that the whole world was enveloped in darkness. Siva thereupon cursed her and deposed her from her position of wife. Afterwards regretting what he had done, but being unable to restore her, he instructed her to sit for six months in the Kumbanuddy tank in Yecambaran temple and meditate on the deity, at the end of which time he appeared before her and restored to her her privileges. This is symbolized on the tenth day of the feast by placing images of the God and Goddess (*Kaumatchy*) together in one chamber. At Conjeeveram at the wedding hour of the deities, private marriages are performed within the precincts of the temple.

(7) *Tamil New Year.*—This falls on April 12th, the first day of the Tamil month Chitra. It is observed in the same way as the Teloogoo new year; but no anointment takes place, the day being dedicated on the part of the Brahmins to the spirits of departed ancestors.

(8) *Narsimha Jayanty.*—In honour of the lion-man, the fourth incarnation of Vishnoo, in which he destroyed the giant Hiranyacasip. On this day Vaishnavas fast till the evening, when after worshipping the God, they eat in company. The special offering to Narsimha is sugar-water (*paunacam*). This festival falls on the 13th day of the second month Vaishaukha.

(9) *Garooda Ootsavam at Triplicane.*—This occurs on the third day of the month Chitra, that is to say, in April or May. It is held in honour of the God Parthasarathy at the place named.

(10) *Ratotsavam at Triplicane.*—This is a car festival and is held in conjunction with the last, occurring four days later, that is to say, on the seventh day of Chitra.

(11) *Garooda Ootsavam at Conjeeveram.*—This takes place in the month of Vaiyasy, or in May. It lasts ten days, during each of which the Vishnoo idol Varadarajaswami visits Siva Canjy, or Larger Canjy, on various *vahanas* for the purpose of permitting the other deities to pay their respects to him. He thus goes down the street two miles long, which leads from his own temple to the Rajaveethy, at the foot of which he rests for a while in a mantapam belonging to him. Varadaraja and Yecambaranathar, the Siva idol, are held to be brothers-in-law, and the evening of the sixth day of the feast is occupied by a visit to the Siva temple. The image is brought down to the front of it, taken thrice round about from right to left and the same number of times the opposite way, and then taken away again. This festival is a display of Vaishnavism against the old Shievism.

(12) *Auny Amavasya.*—This is the new-moon festival of the month of Auny. The floating festival at Trivellore falls on this date.

(13) *Audy Amavasya.*—This is the new-moon occurring in the solar month Audy, and is observed only by the Tamils.

(14) *Auvanimoolum.*—This is held in the month of Auvany, that is to say, in August or September, on the day on which the constellation *Moolam* appears. It is observed only by the Tamils.

(15) *Vara Lutchmee Vratam.*—This occurs in the month of Audy, or about August. It is a festival attended by women only, who make offerings to Lutchmee, the wife of Vishnoo, and invoke her aid in preserving them from being widows. Each woman celebrates the festival in her own house.

(16) *Avaniyavattam* or *Oopacarmam.*—This is peculiar to the three twice-born castes, and is the annual renewal of their sacred order, a new thread being put on. One meal only is taken on this day. It occurs generally in August.

(17) *Gocoola Ashtamy* and *Shree Jayanthy* or *Krishna Jananam.*—The birth-day of Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnoo, which falls on the 7th or 8th day of the fifth month Shrauvana, or about the end of August. It is observed chiefly by Vaishnavas, and particularly by the class of cow-herds who are denominated Yadavas. It is a fasting day for Brahmins. In the evening the sectarians bathe, and after worshipping Krishna by offerings of toolasy (*ocymum sanctum*) and other flowers parade the streets with hilarity. Sweetmeats are manufactured on this occasion in great variety. On the evening of the following day the images are carried in procession. Cow-herds keep up special rejoicings.

(18) *Saumavaidy Oopacarmam.*—This is similar to the Oopacarmam mentioned above. It is however observed only by those of the three twice-born castes who belong to the Saumaveda school of philosophy.

(19) *Pillayar Chowthy* or *Vinayaka Chatoorty.*—This occurs on the fourth day of the sixth month Bhadrapada and is in honour of Vinayac or Pillayar, son of Siva, who is worshipped by all Shaivites as the dispenser of learning and the remover of difficulties from suitable understandings. This deity is also called Vigneshwara and Ganesh. On the day in question clay images of the deity, riding upon the back of a rat, are made, duly consecrated, and worshipped in houses and families; they are afterwards thrown into a river or tank.

(20) *Ananta Chatoordashee.*—This is a religious ceremony observed by males only. It occurs on the 14th day of the sixth month. At the break of day the Brahmin family priest consecrates a vessel, by reciting certain formulas. He is then presented with cloths and money. This ceremony is performed only by those who have previously made a vow.

(21) *Mahalaya Amavasya.*—This is the new-moon of the lunar month Bhadrapada, when ceremonies are performed in honour of deceased ancestors, and food is offered to them. The whole fortnight indeed ending with the new-moon is held sacred to the deceased ancestors, and goes under the name of *Mahalya Pacsham*; ceremonies being performed on the thithy of the deceased by the surviving heir who performed his funeral obsequies.

(22) *Saraswatee Poojarambham—Ayudha Pujah* and *Dusserah.* This festival is principally in honour of deceased ancestors. It corresponds to the Doorgha Poojah of Bengal, and is supposed to commemorate a victory

obtained by Doorgha, wife of Siva, over a demon. It is celebrated on the 7th, 8th and 10th days of the seventh month Ashwina, or in October, and is religiously kept. On this day the upper classes of Hindus make offerings of rice, fruit, flowers and new clothes to their ancestors. Brahmins worship Saraswati, the goddess of learning. Every one offers sacrifice also to the tools and implements which he uses in the exercise of his profession, the labourer to his plough, the mason to his trowel, women to their rice mill, &c. This céremony is the Ayudha Pujah (sacrifice to implements). In former times princes gave public shows with a distribution of prizes on these occasions.

(23) *Deepavaly* or the feast of lights.—This is celebrated on the 28th day of the seventh month, which occurs in October or November. The name means the feast of lamps, and a great number of lamps and lanterns are hung round the door of houses. Husbandmen offer sacrifices to the fields, and in some places to the dunghill. The chief observance at this festival is an oil-bath early in the morning, which is considered equivalent to bathing in the Ganges. Fire works and crackers are also used in large quantities and guns are fired. This feast is possibly a relic of ancient fire-worship.

(24) *Gowry*.—This is held on the third day of the sixth month Bhadrapada or in the beginning of September, and lasts several days. It is principally in honour of Siva's wife Parvathy, one of whose names is Gowry. The festival is concluded by erecting a shapeless statue in each village, composed of paste of grain and intended to represent the Goddess. This image is finally placed under a canopy, and carried through the streets.

(25) *Bharani Deepam*.—This is a feast of lights celebrated in honour of Vishnoo. It occurs in November or December.

(26) *Kartigay*.—A similar festival to the Deepavaly, observed by Tamils only. It occurs on the full-moon day in the solar month Kartigay when the constellation Kartigay appears. In some parts of the country most of the observances of the Deepavaly are adopted at the Kartigay.

(27) *Vishnoo Deepam* or *Perumal Tirunal*.—In honour of Perumal or Vishnoo celebrated by the Vaishnavas. It is generally celebrated on the day after Kartigay, and is considered to be the day on which Bulichakra-

varthy obtained immortality, he being the one of the seven *Chiranjeevis* or the undying who live till the end of the world.

(28) *Vaikunta Ekadasy.*—This occurs on the 11th day of the ninth month Margasheersha, or in December, and is a special festival of the Vaishnavas. On this day the gates of paradise are open to all pious people; hence another name for the feast, *viz.*, Swargadwaura, 'gate of heaven.' It is a fasting day for both Brahmins and Shoodras. The feast is particularly sacred at Shreerungam, though common to Vishnoo temples in general.

(29) *Aroodra Darsanam.*—This is held in the month of Margaly, that is to say, in December or January. It lasts for ten days. It is particularly sacred at Chidambaram.

(30) *Bhogy Pundigay.*—This is an unimportant festival except for the fact that it immediately precedes the Pongal and is generally looked upon as part of that feast. It occurs on the last day of the month of Margaly, or in January. There are no particular religious ceremonies connected with this festival. It is looked upon as a period for relaxation.

(31) *Pongal* or *Sancranty.*—This is one of the most famous festivals. It is celebrated on the first day of the Hindu month Makara or Tai, which falls about the 11th or 12th of January, that being the day on which the sun passes from Saggitarius to Capricornus, and lasts three days, during which time the Tamilians employ themselves in visiting their friends. This feast is such for two reasons. The first that the month of Margaly (December), every day in which is unlucky, is about to expire; and the other, that it is to be succeeded by a month, each day of which is fortunate. In order to guard against evil, every morning during the month of December the women of the family scour a space before the door of each house, upon which are drawn by means of flour certain white-lines. Upon these lines are placed balls of cow-dung, each bearing a citron blossom. The balls are daily picked up and preserved, and on the last day of the month, the women put the whole in a basket, and go with music to some waste place, where they deposit the relics. The meaning of these very primitive customs has yet to be examined. The first day of the succeeding festival is called Bhogy Pongal, and is kept by inviting near relations to an entertainment. The second day is called Surya (Sun) Pongal, or Peroom (great) Pongal, and is set apart in honour of the sun, married women having purified themselves by bathing clothed, boil rice and milk in the open air. This is

the chief day for visits. The second day is called the Pongal of cows. A mixture is made of water, saffron, and leaves, with which the cattle are sprinkled. The animals are then adorned with garlands, their horns are painted, and strings of cocoanuts and other fruits are hung on them. They are then driven out with music, and allowed to graze, for the rest of the day without a keeper. The festival concludes with a procession of idols to the village common.

(52) *Tai Amavasya.*—This is the new-moon falling in the solar month Tai, and is observed only by Tamils. *Shraddha,* or funeral offerings to deceased ancestors, are performed specially on this day by the Hinduized upper classes; presents being at the same time made to Brahmins. The favourable days for this purpose are the new-moons from August to January, but the Tai Amavasya is the chief.

(33) *Taipoosham.*—This day is sacred to Soobramaniya, the second son of Siva. The feast is particularly observed at the shrine of Pulney in Madura. The day is considered auspicious for purposes of education, next after the Dusserah. The harvest feast is observed on the same day in Vishnoo temples.

(34) *Maha Shivaratry.*—"The night of Siva," a festival of great importance among Lingayets. It is celebrated on the 28th day of the Hindu month Magha, at the end of February or beginning of March, and the ceremonies consist of purification of the Lingas. After sacrifices, the celebrators should pass the night awake, employing themselves in reading *pooranas* relating to Siva. The feast is particularly observed at Kalastry in North Arcot district.

(35) *Maghizhady sevay* at Tiruvattore.—This occurs in the month Mausy, in February.

(36) *Holy Pundigay, Hootausana Powrnamy* or *Kaumanpandigay.*—Celebrated on the full-moon of the lunar month Phalgoona, occurring generally in March. It is observed principally by the lower classes to commemorate the destruction of Kama (Cupid) by the God Siva. At the close of the festival a pile is lighted in every village, on which a cake is placed. In Bengal it is called Holy, or Swinging festival. In Travancore cocks are offered by Nayars, who kill them before the door of the temple of Kalee or Bhagavatee.